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Theorising work: investigating the employment of people with learning difficulties

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Abstract

Abstract

Paid employment for people with learning difficulties became central to social inclusion agendas over the period of Labour governments between 1997 and 2010. This found its clearest expression in *Valuing Employment Now* (2009) the first policy document in UK history to specifically focus on the role of employment in the lives of people with learning difficulties. This thesis tests the validity of the claims made in this and other policy documents seeking to embed the idea that employment supports social inclusion. The overarching research question addressed by the thesis is: Is employment a vehicle for social inclusion for people with learning difficulties?

Using a qualitative multi-method approach, this question is explored through an analysis of how policy has informed practice over time; the extent to which young people with learning difficulties are prepared for employment; what employment means to people with learning difficulties; and how the identities associated with people with learning difficulties influence inclusion through employment.

The thesis analyses relationships between structure and agency in the specific context of learning difficulties and employment.

The thesis investigates how employment for people with learning difficulties has been contextualised by policy, service provision and ideologies over time. It interrogates how people with learning difficulties have interpreted this policy-provision-ideas context, and attempted to negotiate it. The thesis analyses the extent to which people with learning difficulties consider employment as an opportunity for them to become involved in a process of social inclusion. In order to support this analysis, the thesis utilises concepts drawn from sociological theory, in particular the concept of structuration (Giddens, 1990).

The research found that people with learning difficulties – employed and unemployed – consider employment to have the potential for social inclusion. However, as well as numerous structural barriers research also found that a combination of policy and practice over time has constructed and maintained identity 'types' (Giddens, 1990: 118) which constrain the extent to which employment can facilitate social inclusion. Further, the research found evidence that people with learning difficulties are aware of the identities they are being invited to adopt and draw on them in contradictory ways.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

This chapter sets out the scope of the thesis, outlining some of the central themes it explores. It establishes terms and references that will be used throughout the thesis. It gives an overview of the conceptual framework the thesis draws upon, the research methods chosen and describes what each chapter discusses.

1. Employment and people with learning difficulties

Paid employment for people with learning difficulties became central to social inclusion agendas over the period of Labour governments between 1997 and 2010. Policy, most notably outlined in the documents *Valuing People* (2001) *Valuing People Now* (2009) and *Valuing Employment Now* (2009), has increasingly sought to establish employment as the key element of a wider inclusion agenda. This thesis explores the extent to which inclusion through employment is possible and in the process develops an analysis of how employment has informed and continues to inform the lives of people with learning difficulties.

Employment has been described as one of the central 'constituting features of the object-world' (Giddens, 1991: 45). For all human beings, whether we work

and the type of work we do sets personal incomes and shapes standards of living. Employment can act as an indicator of social class (Wright, 1979) and social status (Rapley, 2004) providing a framework by which social value is measured. Whilst the history of employment has long attracted academic interest, the employment of people with learning difficulties has remained an under-researched topic. In fact, employment in the terms quoted above – as something that sets the contexts for how human beings live their lives – has been regarded as largely incidental to the lives of people with learning difficulties. As this thesis shows, for a large part of the history of people with learning difficulties, employment was a way simply of defraying the costs of care or of 'occupying time' (O'Connor and Tizard, 1956 90-92). There was little expectation that they should either find paid employment or benefit from it financially or developmentally.

My personal interest in the lack of employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties arose whilst employed as a Local Authority youth worker in charge of services for disabled young people in the north London Borough of Camden. Between 2000 and 2007 I worked with many young people with learning difficulties, some from early adolescence to working age. Over the course of seven years none of the young people with learning difficulties that I worked with found paid jobs before they left the youth provision at 25. A few attended Further Education colleges, the rest did very little.

This partially explains why Camden was chosen as a base for the research. One consequence of my years working there was that I amassed a great many contacts – with work colleagues in Local Authority, local voluntary sector and private sector agencies and amongst the learning difficulties community – many of which I drew upon during this research. Though overall my existing contacts

facilitated research access, these relationships also presented research challenges as explained in Chapter 3. A further reason for choosing Camden lies in the fact that for a short period of time during the 1980s it led in developing innovative ways of providing services for people with learning difficulties as discussed in Chapter 5. As I argue elsewhere in the thesis, this was a key historical period in service development for people with learning difficulties, with the first concerted efforts to begin situating services in the voluntary and private sectors rather than in local authorities. How services developed in Camden influenced service provision more widely is reflected on in Chapter 5.

The thesis develops an historical analysis of employment for people with learning difficulties stretching from 1944 to 2010. In 1944 the land-mark Disabled Persons (Employment) Act became law, marking an important shift in policy and discourses regarding disability and employment. The historical nature of my research allows for the inclusion of testimony from a wide age range of people with learning difficulties, the oldest being 74 when interviewed and the youngest 19. The testimonies from people of different ages provide data illuminating different historical phases of employment allowing the thesis to compare and contrast employment experiences over time.

In terms of the more recent historical picture, the national rate of employment for people with learning difficulties barely changed in the 20 years between 1990 and 2010. This figure is difficult to calculate given that people with learning difficulties are inconsistently included in a range of employment-related data collection methods (Redley, 2008). From the data available in 1994 around 7 percent of people with learning difficulties were in paid employment (Cambridge et al, 1994: 63). By 2010 there had been a slight drop in employment rates to 6.4 percent according to the Social Care and Mental Health indicators, National Indicator Set:

2009-2010. In 2009 the National Director of Learning Disabilities quoted the figure of 7.5 percent (Williams, 2009). Emerson and Hatton (2008: 24) placed the figure at 8 percent. *Valuing Employment Now* (2009) claimed 10 percent of those 'known to services' (VEN 2009: 20) were employed. These figures were recorded after a period of, until 2008, historically high rates of general employment and an actively pursued policy of developing employment support schemes and agencies, discussed in particular in Chapters 4 and 5.

With this in mind the overarching research question the thesis addresses is: Is employment a vehicle for social inclusion for people with learning difficulties? In order to investigate this question the thesis is structured around four sub-questions which explore specific elements of the research topic. These are: 1) How did policy inform practice? 2) How are young people prepared for employment? 3) What does employment mean to people with learning difficulties? 4) Do social identities affect how inclusive employment can be?

2. Definitions and terms

The term 'people with learning difficulties' will be used throughout the thesis. 'Learning difficulties' was the chosen terminology of the People First movement in the UK (see www.peoplefirstltd.com/what-do-we-mean.php). In a research project which draws on the principles of inclusive research (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003), it is appropriate to use terms developed and used by the researched group. Use of the term 'learning difficulties' in the thesis differs from its use by Labour Force Surveys, which include in their definition of people with

learning difficulties people with dyslexia and autism (see for example LFS, Office of National Statistics Spring 2004). This definition would broaden the research group to beyond the scope of this thesis. As illustrated below, the phrase 'learning disability' is used by various bodies and in various documents and it will be necessary to use it in this thesis in such contexts for accuracy.

Defining precisely what it is to be a person with learning difficulties has long been problematic and a site of 'contestation' (Carlson 2005: 134). The term 'learning disability' (much less 'learning difficulties') does not appear in DSM-IV, the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines learning disabilities as a 'state of arrested or incomplete development of mind', 'significant impairment of intellectual functioning' and 'significant impairment of adaptive/social functioning' (WHO cited by Hammill, 1990: 32). Other definitions exist but most agree on the above three basic elements. How each element can be measured is contested with IQ tests in particular the subject of an on-going critique on the basis of their subjective and culturally weighted nature (see for example, Binet, 1909; Hurley, 1963; Lewontin, 1993; Gould, 1996, Rapley, 2006). For the purpose of this research, a person with learning difficulties is defined as any person known to social services receiving social support for people labelled with 'learning difficulties' / 'learning disabilities'. (Walmsley, 1995; Booth and Booth, 1996). Where the term 'disabled people' is used in the thesis it refers to people with physical, or sensory impairments, not people with learning difficulties.

Included in the research group are students with learning difficulties on post-16 education courses and/or those who are receiving employment training and support, and people using community-based support services such as Day Centres and evening clubs who have had some employment experience. As the

thesis seeks to analyse experiences and understandings of employment it was important to establish a very general way of increasing the possibility that the sample of participants had some knowledge of the concepts. As a result the research group comprises people labelled with 'mild' or 'moderate' learning difficulties only as these are most likely to enter employment. It does not include those with 'complex and severe' needs.

3. The data sources

The thesis explores three data sources. These are interviews, policy documentation and historical archives.

Interview data, was collected from learning difficulties 'stakeholders' (Jackson 2000). These include students with learning difficulties and their tutors, trainers and other supporters. It includes workers with learning difficulties who were in employment or who had worked. This group will be referred to as Day Centre members throughout for reasons explained in Chapter 3. A range of service providers were also interviewed, including individuals who were providing or who had provided either employment-specific support or general social services. A small number of interviews with parents of people with learning difficulties were also undertaken. Throughout the research project interviews were viewed as directed conversations (Lofland and Lofland, 1984), allowing data to develop with as natural a flow as possible. The main aim was to elicit participants' 'definitions of terms, situations and events' (Charmaz, 2001: 32) and to capture the interpretations and meanings participants ascribed to and drew from the

experiences they discussed. Particular care was taken to support the input of young participants. In this regard, my own experience of working with young people, coupled with theoretical approaches developed by among others, David Silverman (1983), were useful in combination.

The second data source is local and national policy documentation. This provides the context for interview data and, as explained below, local archival data. The analysis developed in Chapter 4 divides policy development into three general phases; from 1944 to 1970, the move of employment provision from pre-war occupation centres to Adult Training Centres; from 1970 to 1990, the transition from Local Authority provision to a supported employment model with a 'mixed economy' (Griffiths, 1988) of Local Authority and voluntary and private sector agencies providing services; and from 1990 to 2010, the move towards voluntary and private sector agency domination of service provision.

The third data source was contained within three London-based archives. These were the London Metropolitan Archives, the London Borough of Camden Local History Archives, and the archives of the Camden-based voluntary sector service provider, the Camden Society. Historical archives fell into three categories:

- war time and post-war texts describing long-stay hospitals serving the Camden area and the post-war development of community employment support across London;
- Local Authority documents, including minutes of meetings, local policy and other relevant employment support centred literature dating from the mid 1970s to the mid 1990s;
- memos, minutes of meetings and policy documents specifically pertaining to the Camden Society from the late 1980s to 2009.

4. Overview of chapters

This section provides a brief overview of the contents of each of the following eight chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides a rationale for my research by analysing the learning difficulties literature and reflecting on the gaps with regard to employment and people with learning difficulties. The chapter develops a critique of the social model of disability, highlighting some of the problems the model presents for developing an understanding of the relationship between employment and people with learning difficulties. It draws on a Foucauldian perspective to interrogate the limitations of the social model. The chapter explores the concept of structuration (Giddens, 1990) and outlines how it can be used to support an analysis of learning difficulties and employment.

The chapter discusses the history of special education and shows how this literature has sought to explain the links between special education and employment, reflecting on some of the weaknesses of this analysis. It examines theories of employment meanings, illustrating the gaps in the literature with regard to capturing and interpreting what employment means for people with learning difficulties. Finally, the chapter considers the relationships between

social inclusion and employment, and the concept of identity 'typification' (Giddens, 1990, 117-118) as it can be applied to people with learning difficulties.

Chapter 3: Methodology: How the study was undertaken

This chapter explores key methodological issues in research with people with learning difficulties and how they set a context for the research methodology used in this thesis. It links the research aim of the development of an analysis of the employment of people with learning difficulties outlined in Chapter 2 to a discussion of the literature of qualitative, narrative-based research which seeks to 'find ways of giving people with learning difficulties a voice' (Walmsley, 1995: 52). It discusses narrative qualitative research, in particular exploring the nature of interviews and the potential of oral history interviews to explore relationships between social inclusion and employment. The second part of this chapter describes the specific research strategies drawn from the research literature that informed my own research methods, and recounts my experience in the field.

Chapter 4: The policy context of research

Chapter 4 contextualises the findings presented later in the thesis. It demonstrates how some of the theoretical ideas discussed in Chapter 2 came to feature in a range of practical policy initiatives. The policy detail discussed in this chapter sets out the ideas, beliefs and rhetoric expressed at a policy level and draws on an analysis of primary documentation, gathered through archival

research, and secondary sources. The chapter is divided into five sections, addressing theoretical concerns and specific historical phases.

Chapter 5: How policy informed practice: The London Borough of Camden, a case study

As discussed above there are important historical reasons for analysing the learning difficulties services in Camden. During the 1980s in particular the Borough was at the forefront of innovative developments with particular regard to the partnership between a Local Authority and a voluntary sector organisation. Using a case study approach, this chapter analyses the transition of the responsibility for service delivery from one agency to another between the 1970s and the 21st century. In particular, it describes how policy informed the growth and practice of Camden's leading voluntary sector organisation for people with learning difficulties, the Camden Society. It describes and analyses the decline of a system of employment support based on Government-funded Adult Training Centres and the subsequent rise of voluntary sector provision. It interrogates the ideas and ideologies that accompanied this change in service delivery.

Chapter 6: How students with learning difficulties are prepared for employment in the post-16 education sector

This chapter examines how, from 1996 to 2010, the ideologies discussed in chapters 4 and 5 influenced the provision of post-16 education and training for students with learning difficulties. In particular this chapter interrogates how

Further Education (FE) colleges were encouraged to shadow wider changes in service delivery for people with learning difficulties by adopting a more 'corporate approach' (Tomlinson, 1997: 34) and by developing individualised education programmes. The chapter assesses how far they have been able to achieve this and to what affect.

Chapter 7: Exploring what employment means to people with learning difficulties

This chapter explores what employment means to people with learning difficulties. It draws on and adapts an analysis of what employment means to workers without learning difficulties developed by Raymond Williams (1968). It sets these findings in the context of 'Pride and shame' an analysis of time developed in the writings of Bourdieu (1963) Thompson (1967) and Adams (2002).

Chapter 8: Employment, inclusion and negotiating identities

This chapter explores how people with learning difficulties negotiate their identities in employment contexts through the active management of self; and assesses the influence of culturally constructed identity types associated with people with learning difficulties, carried in both professional attitudes and in 'common sense' notions of what it means to have a learning difficulty.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This chapter draws together the main findings of the thesis and discusses their implications in terms of service delivery and future research. It assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the methodological approach used, and identifies the thesis's unique contribution to knowledge about learning difficulties and employment.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the rationale for my research. It shows how the thesis will address gaps in the learning difficulties literature, specifically with regard to how employment informs the life experiences of people with learning difficulties. The chapter shows the potential for the thesis to contribute to an on-going political debate concerning how to improve employment rates, and the nature of employment experiences. It shows how the thesis will provide a detailed account of the history of employment for people with learning difficulties and details how the critique of the key barriers to employment set out in the thesis might inform the development of ways to address them.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on employment and people with learning difficulties and examines how people with learning difficulties have been constructed over time in relation to work. As Walmsley has argued (1994) what has been perceived historically as the passive and dependent nature of people with learning difficulties rendered them apparently 'incapable' of employment and therefore the concern of specialised systems of social support and control. In this sense, employment was perceived as beyond them. However, this view grew to be increasingly at odds with social policy developments from 2001 onwards which began to stress the importance of paid employment to the social inclusion and future well-being of people with learning difficulties, without necessarily challenging the 'naturalised views' (Goodley and Rapley, 2001: 230) of people with learning difficulties as passive recipients of social support. This chapter examines the tensions between the historical view of employment as beyond the capabilities of people with learning difficulties, with the twenty-first century view of employment as essential to their social inclusion, well-being and future lives.

This chapter touches upon policy pertaining to the employment of people with learning difficulties, although this is developed more fully in Chapter 4. In the main this chapter reviews both the historical and contemporary literature which illustrates the general experience of employment marginality of people with learning difficulties for most of the period between the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act and 2010 (see for example Humphries and Gordon, 1992; Borsay, 2005; Danieli and Wheeler, 2006). Previous research has attempted to analyse the

nature of employment and employment support for people with learning difficulties in the post World War Two period (see for example Mittler especially 1979; Carter, 1981; Goodley and Norouzi 2005). But it is clear from a review of the literature that there remains a gap in our knowledge about the employment experiences and understandings as articulated from the perspective of people with learning difficulties – an issue addressed directly by this thesis.

This chapter examines attempts to draw together historical and policy developments in order to theorise the employment experiences of people with learning difficulties. The social model of disability (Oliver, 1990) and an on-going critique of it (see for example Shakespeare, 2002, 2006) contribute to this, as do elements of an emerging Foucauldian analysis (Tremain, 2005). This thesis explores whether and how sociological concepts drawn from outside of learning difficulties studies can also contribute to our understanding, setting out an analysis of the potential value of the concept of 'structuration' (Giddens, 1990). In particular, 'structuration' offers a means of understanding relationships between agency and structure, of revealing the active input of agents into the social structures that 'govern' them (Callinicos, 1995: 86). This idea is explored with reference to people with learning difficulties and their employment and employment support services.

The chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 examines the literature of employment histories of people with learning difficulties. It analyses how a social model and Foucauldian theorising adds to an understanding of the employment of people with learning difficulties. It explores how 'structuration' might contribute through its conceptual analysis of agency-structure relationships. Section 2 reviews how debates on the nature and purpose of education for people with learning difficulties have influenced their employment opportunities and potential.

Section 3 examines a literature analysing the meanings of employment, again drawing on the literature outside of learning difficulties studies, in particular exploring the ideas of the cultural materialist Raymond Williams and his analysis of what employment means to workers without learning difficulties. Section 4 interrogates the literature of exclusion/inclusion and explores the extent to which identity, and identity 'typification' (Giddens, 1990, 117-118) influences how inclusive employment can be.

1. The employment of people with learning difficulties: histories and concepts

For the majority of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, disabled people have in large part been marginal to mainstream employment (Humphries and Gordon; 1992, Borsay, 2005; Welshman, 2006). Though incorporated into industry during and after World War One, disabled people continued to experience discriminatory practices through the inter-war years (Humphries and Gordon, 1992: 117-119). During World War Two a war-time 'famine of men' (Bolderson, 1980: 170; see also French, 1998; Thomson 1998; Rhodes-Wood, 1988; Gelb, 1986, 1990) created what has been characterised as conditions of full employment for disabled people (Humphries and Gordon, 1992; Danieli and Wheeler, 2006: 494). This period was short lived and post-war disabled people returned to conditions of unemployment or employment in sheltered workplaces (Bolderson, 1980; Borsay, 2005: 135; Danieli and Wheeler, 2006: 495).

The history of the development of a social grouping of people with 'mental deficiencies' provides numerous illustrations of how that development linked in with the perceived unemployable nature of people with learning difficulties (Sutherland, 1984; Digby et al, 1996; Jackson, 2000; Thomson, 2001). The belief that this group was a social burden accompanied this idea of unemployability. Burden on others has been consistently cited as a reason underpinning the development of segregated provision for people with learning difficulties. As Carlson (2005) argues; 'Walter Fernald, [1859-1924] the superintendent of one institution, writes, "Home care of a low grade idiot consumes so much of the working capacity of the wage earner of the household that often the entire family becomes pauperised. Humanity and public policy demand that these families should be relieved of the burden of those helpless idiots"' (cited in Carlson, 2005: 141). Kenneth Robinson, speaking in support of the 1959 UK Mental Health Act alluded to the knock-on effect of 'mental disorder' for families; 'every one of these defectives in a family meant that the lives of two, three or half a dozen other people must be affected adversely' (cited in Jones, 1960: 290). Robinson's comments echo those made by Lord Wedgewood during parliamentary debates of the original 1913 Mental Deficiency Act who argued against its implementation on the grounds that the primary concern of the Act was not for people with learning difficulties themselves but with releasing to the labour market the family members responsible for looking after their disabled children: 'The one interest of Honourable Members who support this bill is the production of wealth by the community. They have no interest whatever in the real well-being of the child, in its happiness, or in the happiness or wishes of the parents' (Parliamentary Papers, 1913: 244). For Lord Wedgewood, the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act was not about providing care but about freeing up more potential labour for industrial capitalism.

The literature on the employment of people with learning difficulties illustrates that employment levels in the community remained largely unchanged throughout the 20th century, aside from during World Wars One and Two (O'Connor and Tizard, 1956; Emerson and Hatton, 2008). Historically, employment practice in long-stay institutions changed according to levels of general employment (O'Connor and Tizard, 1956: 91). The authors reflect that 'In times of severe and chronic unemployment, when very few defectives can be sent on licence to the community, and when public policy deems it expedient for institutions not to compete in any sense with private employers' inmates are largely given 'something to do rather than employ them on work of value to the community' (O'Connor and Tizard, 1956: 91). The authors conclude; 'In times of full employment and general shortages a different attitude to the training of defectives seems advisable' (1956: 91). In other words, the authors argued for the value to society of preparing people with learning difficulties for work in the community in order that they might augment the labour force when workers without learning difficulties were in short supply. This influential work set the tone for the development of Adult Training Centres in the years following the 1959 Mental Health Act (see Chapter 4 for a fuller discussion).

High levels of unemployment for disabled people and the social exclusion it implies was a policy concern of Labour governments from 1997 to 2009 (see for example, *New Deal for Disabled People*, 1999, *The Welfare Reform Act*, 2007). Despite this unemployment levels for disabled people remained high (Roulstone and Barnes, 2005). As Chapter 1 showed, for people with learning difficulties employment rates remained largely static over this period, with, in 2010, rates of 6.4 percent (Social Care and Mental Health indicators, National Indicator Set: 2009-2010). Roulstone and Barnes argue the lack of progress may result from an

inappropriate model of disability, the 'historical predominance of a medical model in UK disability policy more widely' (Roulstone and Barnes, 2005: 1-2).

A centrally important concept drawing together historical and policy developments in order to theorise the employment experiences of people with learning difficulties and disabled people generally is the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990). This model of disability offers the most consistent critique of a medical model of disability and an analysis of the link between employment and disability (Barnes, 1999, 2003; Oliver and Barnes, 1998; Oliver, 1990). Oliver (1992) argues that the division of labour characteristic of industrial capitalism has effectively dis-abled people with impairments from taking part in social production (see also Swain, Finklestein and Oliver, 1993; Finklestein, 1988).

Disability cannot be abstracted from the social world which produces it; it does not exist outside the social structures in which it is located and independent of the meanings given to it. In other words, disability is socially produced. In the past 100 years or so, industrial societies have produced disability first as a medical problem requiring medical intervention and second as a social problem requiring social provision. (Oliver, 1992: 102)

The social model serves both as a theoretical tool and a political rallying point for disabled activists and their supporters, making its presence also felt in policy development (see for example, Disability Discrimination Act, 1995, *Progress through Partnership*, 2007).

However, the model has been criticised for its analysis of learning difficulties. Much of that critique focuses on the dualism the model establishes between 'disability' – which is seen as a social construct as above – and 'impairment' which is: 'used to refer to the actual attributes (or lack of attributes), the abnormality, of a person, whether in terms of limbs, organs or mechanisms, including psychological' (<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/thomas%20pam/Defining%20Impairment%20within%20the%20Social%20Model%20of%20Disability.pdf> accessed 3 April, 2011).

For example, Barnes and Mercer (1997) question the ways in which 'impairment' is left in the realms of medical discourse as a result of this dualism, where it remains as a static, naturalised and individualised phenomenon. Goodley and Norouzi (2005) point to the contradictions of the social model's analysis of intellectual 'impairment' in the context of the social construction of employment opportunities: 'Following the social model of disability, our position is not to understand barriers as a function of an individual's impairment but to consider the social origins of those disabling barriers' (Goodley and Norouzi, 2005: 221).

What has been termed the 'Second Wave' (Rapley 2004: 64) social model approach criticises the original version on conceptual grounds for its reductionist approach rooted in a materialist critique of industrial capitalism:

Both the medical model and the social model seek to explain disability universally, and end up creating totalizing, meta-historical narratives that exclude important dimensions of disabled people's lives and of their knowledge. The global experience of disabled people is too complex to be rendered within one unitary model. (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002)

For Shakespeare and Watson 'totalizing' theory is no longer possible in a post-modern world. The authors are themselves critiqued for their acceptance of the medical reality of 'intellectual impairment' which, for them, remains as a static, a priori given (Rapley 2004: 67-68). As Rapley argues, changes in the social construction of employment over time illustrates the socially contingent nature of learning difficulty itself. As he argues, since 'employment opportunities are just as much a socially structured barrier to people with an intellectual disability as a flight of steps to a wheelchair user, so too may they be socially remade.' (Rapley, 2004: 67). A developing Foucauldian perspective adds to this analysis of the socially 'contingent' (Carlson, 2005: 133) nature of learning difficulties, particularly through Carlson's analysis of the employment of people with learning difficulties. Carlson's critique highlights a central contradiction of the 'naturalised views' (Goodley and Rapley, 2001: 230) which hold that people with learning difficulties are unemployable. Having been removed from mainstream society as a social burden and incapable of useful labour, once inside institutions their labour became essential to the running of institutions. Quoting Fernald, Carlson argues:

Most individuals living in institutions were subjected to rigorous training and supervision, the goal of which was productivity...Fernald admits that the most prominent feature of our educational training today is the attention paid to instruction in industrial occupations and manual labour'...Outside the institution, feeble-mindedness is considered incurable, hopeless and dangerous, a condition that requires the institution to protect both those who have it and society at large. Within

the wall of the institution, however, the same condition is seen as improvable and disciplinary techniques are employed to make inmates productive. (Carlson, 2005: 142)

UK archives also illustrate this employment role. During the later stages of World War Two long-stay institution records complain about the lack of 'high grade' patients necessary to work on the wards, in the kitchens and in the gardens (St Lawrence's Presented Papers, 1943). The Wood Report (1929) argues that 'An institution which takes all grades and types is economical because the high grade patients do the work, and make everything necessary, not only for themselves but also for the lower grade' though institutions' ability to run economically on the basis of inmate labour decreased over time (Wood Report, 1929, quoted in Tizard, 1956: 34; see also Jackson, 2000: 38, 139, 150; Tomlinson, 1983).

In the post long-stay institution world Goodley and Rapley (2001) have explored how the actions of people with learning difficulties, in their interaction with the social structures that govern them, challenge accepted beliefs of what it is to have learning difficulties, for example, the perception that they are incapable of maintaining mainstream employment. They argue that through their resistance people with learning difficulties become active agents in their own lives, while their experiences of being disabled (where naturalised views of impairment are at the core of oppression) 'offer us lived examples that enable the re-socialising of impairment' (Goodley and Rapley, 2001: 230). In other words, through interaction with the structures that govern their behaviours people with learning difficulties can begin to re-define what it means to have an 'intellectual impairment'.

As I outlined in the introduction to this chapter, policy which constructs employment as a means of achieving broader social inclusion sets employment up as the link between disabled and non-disabled worlds, as a process of exchange or transition. It is important, therefore, that this thesis develops an analysis of ideas beyond the learning difficulties literature that investigate that process of exchange, that have the potential to illuminate what mainstream employment means and how actors might impact upon it. To conclude this section I therefore discuss the concept of structuration, a sociological theory which provides an analytical framework for understanding how people influence the social systems that govern their actions.

The concept of structuration (Giddens 1979, 1984, 1990) enables an exploration of the types of agency-structure relationships outlined above. It offers a sociological theory with which to explore the articulations and fluidities of the relationships between institutions and people, people and institutions. Though not previously used specifically in learning difficulties studies, the framework offers the potential to add structure to an analysis of people with learning difficulties' relationships over time with the institutions that govern employment. These institutions include national and local government through policy and provision, voluntary sector agencies and their employment support provision and specialised systems of education and employment. In short, these represent the policy and practice of employment and employment support.

The key elements of structuration are the 'mutual dependence' of structure and agency, the differences between systems and their constituent structures, the notion of 'unintended consequences' and the concept of 'standardised modes of behaviour' which Giddens develops from the earlier work of Radcliffe-Brown (1940). This section concludes with an explanation of these constituent parts and

how it might add to an analysis of how people with learning difficulties have interacted with the history, policy and institutions that have shaped their employment opportunities and experiences.

Structuration explains the relationship between structure and agency as a mutually dependent duality. People act but always in a structural context. This is a mutually dependent relationship (structure influences action, action influences structure) which evolves over time and space. Structures govern (Callinicos, 1995: 86) action. They do not simply constrain action but are also enabling and are present in actions pursued by individuals and groups (Callinicos, 1995: 86). Accordingly, how people with learning difficulties behave is structured by policy and practice and their behaviour, or agency, can in turn influence those structures/policy and practice.

Structuration provides a means of distinguishing between systems and structures, enabling an analysis of social systems via their component parts at a micro level, comprising policy, human action and much else (Giddens 1990: 54). This has potential for this thesis, an aim of which is to build a history of employment for people with learning difficulties since World War Two through developing an analysis of its component parts at a micro level – learning difficulty national and local policy, histories of employment in the London borough of Camden built from oral testimony and national, local and voluntary sector service provider archives.

The notion of the 'unintended consequences' of actions (Giddens, 1990: 235) provides an explanation of how social and personal developments shape historical processes and institutions in novel and unintended ways. This avoids a crudely determinist approach to historical events and processes but allows for a more subtle understanding of the actions of learning difficulties stakeholders. It

may be particularly useful when considering 'standardised modes of behaviour' (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940; Kuper, 1983: 56; Giddens, 1990: 96) which provides an analysis of social institutions and the means by which they exert an influence over actions and identities. For Giddens, modes of behaviours are established and take effect through a process of 'chronic reconstitution' (Giddens, 1990: 96) in the contingent contexts of day to day social activity, that is to say institutional behaviours are passed, reinforced and potentially challenged in day to day conversation, behaviours and language. The notion of unintended consequences may illustrate how in relationships between people with learning difficulties and service providers the outcome of service provision may not always be what was intended.

This section has analysed the literature of the social construction of employment for people with learning difficulties over time, situating this in the broader context of the history of employment for disabled people. It has outlined the development of theoretical approaches seeking to conceptualise employment for people with learning difficulties over time, including the social model of disability and the on-going critique of it. The section considered what Foucault contributes and concluded by discussing the potential of Giddens' concept of structuration. It is argued that this concept has the potential to develop a theoretical framework with which to analyse the relationships people with learning difficulties have with learning difficulties policy and practice of employment support. The gaps in the literature explored by the discussion above led to the development of the first of the four sub questions: How did policy inform practice?

2. *'Vocational' and 'educational' tendencies within specialised systems of education*

This section discusses the history of specialised systems of education for students with learning difficulties. It analyses the history of competing 'vocational' (Tomlinson, 1982) and 'educational' (Mittler, 1979) tendencies which have shaped the nature of educational provision for people with learning difficulties over time. This history sets a context for an analysis of the literature of post-16 educational provision in the twenty-first century which serves to set an historical context for analysis of interview data collected from students and staff in post-16 education offered to people with learning difficulties.

The literature of special education suggests that at policy and practice level two historical traditions describe the aims and methods of specialised systems and structures of education for people with learning difficulties with regard to employment. The first tradition has been described as the 'vocational' model, (Tomlinson, 1982) one whose primary concern is to create individuals of use to a capitalist labour market. A second tradition, which grew in the UK after World War Two, regards employment more as a further step in the education of individuals with learning difficulties, the 'educational approach' (Mittler, 1979: 104). Educational methods prioritised by the vocational tradition have at their centre 'manual and industrial' training (Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble Minded, 1908, Volume 8: 108; cited in Tomlinson, 1982: 141). Tomlinson argues pre-twentieth century systems of education developed for people with learning difficulties were largely concerned with 'vocational training and the inculcation of some kind of occupational skill to prevent the "great torrent of pauperism" foreseen by the Egerton Commission (1889)' (Tomlinson, 1982: 141-2). The Egerton Commission stressed that the major aims of special

schooling should be social adaptation, conformity and the ability to earn a living. A state school system began to identify individuals not suited to its teaching methods and social disciplines almost as soon as it became established after 1870 (Sutherland, 1984: 67; Warnock, 1978: 14). Resulting from this the first special class for children deemed incapable of learning in mainstream schools opened in Leicester in 1892, followed by the opening of special classes and schools in London in the same year (Sutherland, 1984: 19; Read and Walmsley, 2006: 459; Tomlinson, 1982: 43). Elementary Schools were funded by a 'payment by results' system which was heavily criticised at the time (Simon, 1965: 114-116; Sutherland, 1984: 6-7) and produced teaching methods dominated by rote learning and 'drilling' (Simon, 1965: 114) in the '3 Rs' – reading, writing and arithmetic. Fears concerning the developmental and learning consequences of 'over-pressure' caused by workloads and intensive teaching methods in the '3 Rs' were expressed by social scientists (Booth, 1902 quoted in Sutherland, 1984: 10).

Teaching the 'three Rs' came to be considered inappropriate for children in special education, particularly for the large group of students with learning difficulties. Tomlinson (1982: 141) argues that during the first half of the twentieth century in England, the aims of special education moved from the three Rs to the 'three Ms' – mechanical or manual, manipulative and moral training – reflecting the vocational aims of the specialised systems. The Royal Commission of 1908 argued that:

The drift of opinion favours the extension of manual or industrial training in special schools. Manual and industrial work represent, indeed, the appropriate instrument of an education which is particularly concerned

with the direct stimulation of the brain through the senses, and with the control of movement and ultimately, of self-control. (Report of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded, 1908, vol 8:108 cited in Tomlinson, 1982: 140).

This was reinforced by the Wood Committee in 1929 which stated that 'it is obvious and universally admitted that the curriculum of these special classes should devote less time than the ordinary school to reading, writing and arithmetic and more time to practical subjects such as bear directly on the child's future, either in the home or in industry' (Woods 1929 II: 151).

Concerns for maximising the vocational aspects of a system of special education persisted into the post war era. Collman (1956, cited in Tomlinson, 1982: 142) noted that 'At least 70 percent of ex pupils are employable and this group is a reliable source of labour'. In a paper describing the work of an FE college Industrial Training Unit for slow learners, Atkinson (1981) noted that while officially the aims of the unit were to provide students with occupational skills, the day to day training is couched in terms of the model of a 'good worker' and the value of good work to those who control the productive processes in society, with an emphasis on students' 'appearance, demeanour, a willingness to accept subordinate roles and discipline' (Atkinson, 1981:43).

In contrast to this approach, the 'educational approach', (Mittler, 1979: 104) developed outside of a school system, and grew after World War Two pioneered by O'Connor and Tizard (see especially *The Social Problem of Mental Deficiency*, 1956). O'Connor and Tizard considered employment as a completion and continuation of education, a desired outcome of and a means by which an

educational process should continue (1952, 1956). Their approach influenced early Adult Training Centre (ATC) provision. Their work was based on a critique of education and employment training offered in long-stay hospital settings which they characterised as isolated from communities, offered by inadequately trained staff using obsolete training practices and equipment and broadly as an exercise in occupying time, in effect constructing dependent and dis-abled people incapable of mainstream employment (O'Connor and Tizard, 1956: 90-92).

The Training Council for Teachers of the Mentally Handicapped, set up in 1964 to oversee Adult Training Centre provision, considered the purpose of ATCs to be broadly educational. The Training Council, run by the Department of Health and Social Services oversaw the development of a number of accredited teaching courses for ATC staff which acknowledged the importance of and provided the basis for the development of specialised teaching skills (Department of Health and Social Security, 1974). Echoing Tizard's original critique of long-stay employment training provision, the Training Council pointed to progress made in ATCs during the 1960s with education and training in a number of ATCs focused more on 'useful productive work rather than traditional "occupational craft"' (Department of Health and Social Security, 1974: 7). Post-1974 the National Development Group for the Mentally Handicapped (NDG)(1974) sought to standardise and improve staff training at ATCs (Mittler and Hogg, 1987) as part of the expansion of ATC provision envisaged by *Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped* (1971). The NDG attempted to clarify the purpose of ATCs more clearly in terms of educational aims (Carter, 1981: 155) following the findings of the national survey of ATC provision discussed above. In 1977 ATCs were renamed 'Social Education Centres' as part of this project (NDG, 1977, Pamphlet 5) encouraging ATC managers and staff to adopt this approach 'whether we call

it work training, industrial therapy, social education, craft work or literacy and numeracy projects' (Mittler, 1979: 104).

The literature discussed above suggests that the nature of special education, whether it be in specialised schools or post-16 provision, results from the interplay between the two approaches – vocational and educational. This tension has been expressed specifically at post-16 education level, in Further Education policy and practice.

Further Education colleges took responsibility for educating post 16 year old students with learning difficulties following the 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act. A survey in 1973 found that 10 percent of those leaving special schools attended FE (Tomlinson, 1997: 188). Tomlinson found that by 1997 this figure was 5.5 percent of a greatly increased student population (Tomlinson, 1997: 189), a fall in percentage terms without necessarily implying a fall in actual numbers of students with learning difficulties since absolute numbers of FE students rose over the period. A specific requirement for FE colleges to have courses linked to employment outcomes was outlined in *Through Inclusion to Excellence* (Learning Skills Council, 2005) which stated that by 2009 all courses should have an explicit vocational focus and that courses that did not would risk losing funding. Expressing a broadly 'vocational' approach, policy has suggested colleges should regard the workplace as places of continuing learning where 'literacy, language and numeracy can be embedded within sustainable employment programmes' (Learning Skills Council, 2006: 32; see also *Valuing Employment Now*, 2009).

The Learning Skills Research Council Report (2009) assesses how general theories of learning have informed FE practice over time. It shows that studies of FE curricula reveal courses with a combination of generic vocational skills and

basic literacy and numeracy, as well as social and life skills (Bradley, Crowe and Scott 1983 cited in LSRC, 2009: 22) referencing a traditional vocational approach with an overemphasis on 'basic skills' (Bradley and Hegarty, 1981 cited in LSRC, 2009: 22). This approach shadows the policy directions discussed above.

A debate in the learning difficulties literature regarding learning theories is whether students with learning difficulties learn in different ways to non-disabled students, or whether the way in which people learn is fundamentally the same. Lewis and Norwich (2001, 2005) describe the two polarities of the debate as the 'general differences' and the 'unique differences' positions. Those who support a 'general differences' approach argue that there are sets of characteristics specific to particular groups of disabled individuals that determine how an individual learns, and therefore that specialised teaching strategies and systems should be adopted. This approach is likely to emphasise the vocational nature of specialised education. Those who adopt the 'unique' position argue that everyone is at once 'the same and different' (LSRC, 2009: 24) and that therefore broadly similar educational opportunities should be made available to all. The learning theory literature does not describe how learning theory choices affect employment preparation. This thesis addresses this issue, investigating learning theory approaches taken by practitioners in specific college settings and reflecting on how teaching choices affect employability.

Important insights into practice are provided by the literature of transitions between schools and colleges, and schools/colleges and employment and how well educational institutions manage them (LSRC, 2009; Beyer and Kaehne, 2009; Kaehne and Beyer, 2009; Winn and Hay, 2009). For example, discussing possible outcomes of the learning process at FE the LSRC report shows the importance of the development of self confidence and self esteem, and points to

how these enable learners to 'cope with and participate in the multiple transitions that occur' (LSRC, 2009: 37). Accompanying this Beyer and Kaehne (2009) suggest that the abilities of students with learning difficulties to play a larger role in transitional processes are consistently downplayed by teaching professionals (2009: 7). Rapley (2004) discusses this at the level of professionals' relationships with people with learning difficulties generally. The author describes ways in which professionals' interactions with students with learning difficulties potentially inhibit their development. The author points to a range of studies suggesting that in 'interactions between care staff and intellectually disabled people, competence is actively constrained by the structure of interaction, with staff initiated interaction most frequently focused on instructions or orders (Markova, 1990; Prior et al, 1979; Kuder and Bryan, 1993)' (Rapley, 2004: 54). Sabsay and Platt (1985) argue that the effect of this is one of 'well intentioned condescension' (cited in Rapley, 2004: 54), an approach which effectively excludes people with learning difficulties from active input into their experience. The thesis examines this phenomenon through its analysis of testimony from staff and students in specialised post-16 education and training provision.

This section has analysed the literature describing the historical development of specialised systems of education for people with learning difficulties. It has discussed some of the implications of the nature of this education for the employability of people with learning difficulties. This historical analysis provides context for a discussion of the development of FE provision for people with learning difficulties between 1996 and 2010. The section ended by looking at a micro level at elements of staff-student relationships in post-16 education. The literature discussed here, and the gaps in the literature this section found, led to the development of the second sub-question: How are young people prepared for employment?

3. *Researching the meaning of employment*

A search of the literature indicates some research into what people with learning difficulties say paid employment means to them. Other research documents the meanings ascribed to employment by the wider population. This section discusses the literature that explores what employment means to workers without learning difficulties in order to develop an analytical framework with which to interpret employment meanings disclosed during research. In particular the section considers the work of Williams (1968) and Rose (1999). It concludes by assessing the literature analysing the relationships between work and time, developed both in the learning difficulties literature and by Thomson, Boudieu and Adams in a broader historical and sociological literature.

The White Paper *Valuing People Now* (2009) makes some attempt to embed meaning into employment for people with learning difficulties. It discusses employment in terms of it being a basic human right, largely denied to people with learning difficulties (30). Elsewhere, the document argues that 'Work defines us: what will you be when you grow up? What do you do for a living? These are questions we all face from others when people want to get to know us. But they are questions seldom directed towards people with learning disabilities' (86). Here, having a job comes to mean having the same rights and opportunities as the rest of society, a measure of social equality and potentially, through the process of working alongside others, social unity.

There are numerous examples in the learning difficulties literature of meanings of employment being developed or interpreted on behalf of people with learning difficulties. Carter (1981) provides examples of what staff in Adult Training Centres felt employment should mean for people with learning difficulties (see pages 169-171). Mittler (especially 1979) also reflects on employment meanings developed by support staff. Rolph (1990, 2005) develops analysis of how staff in occupation centres interpreted what work – as distinct from paid employment – meant to people with learning difficulties. For example, 'In any occupation centre there is generally some form of woodwork and low grade children will accomplish a great deal with sand papering. This craft should augment concentration and also give circulation and muscle control.' (Rolph, 2005: 19). Here, work becomes meaningful through what Williams (1968) describes as its 'by-products'. Work is not important for the value of what is produced through woodwork and sand papering, but as a way to 'augment concentration' and tone muscles. Some attempt has been made to capture what people with learning difficulties themselves make of employment (see for example, Walmsley and Johnson, 2011; Atkinson and Williams, 1990). However, the topic has not been theorised within the wider literature on employment meanings and in this sense lags behind the policy discussed above. To address this, this thesis develops an analysis of employment meanings drawing on the testimony of a wide range of people with learning difficulties. In order to establish a theoretical framework for this analysis the thesis draws upon an approach developed by the cultural materialist Raymond Williams, in his analysis of a collection of oral history accounts of employment developed in *Work* (Fraser, 1968).

A particular strength of this analysis is its underlying principle that:

We start from the working experience and go on from there, to some kind of common description, instead of starting from the conventional descriptions and trying to fit experiences in and to them. (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 282)

Williams' analysis insists on building an analysis of what employment means to people from the bottom up, from the testimony of workers themselves, developing theory from what people say.

Echoing to some degree the interpretations of employment meanings of *Valuing People Now*, Williams points to the 'common condition' (280-282) of employment, which he believes to be a basic meaning of human work 'as distinct from the energy of animals: an articulation of need, a definition of cooperative means, in what is felt and known to be a common condition' (280). This is a central consideration in the analysis of the reflections on employment provided by people with learning difficulties. Do they perceive employment as a 'common condition' and what are the implications of the answer? From this starting point, Williams abstracts elements of employment meanings from the oral history data collected and builds it into a conceptual framework with potential to be applied to the experiences of others. The framework states employment may mean:

- 'An articulation of need, a definition of co-operative means, in what is known and felt to be a common condition' (280)
- 'The process of giving human energy to a desired end' (285)
- 'Not the work itself but that by-product of doing it' (287)
- 'The gap in the meaning of work' (290)

- 'A confirmation of significance' (291)
- 'An absence of meaning...the gap between what work means and what much of it has been made to mean' (292) (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 280-295)

Rose (1999) discusses how employment meanings for workers without learning difficulties are generated by the perceptions of changing patterns of 'networks of relationships' stretching beyond and throughout the workplace. Rose argues this is the case to such an extent that workers do not exist 'in a realm of brute facts and events, but in a realm of meaning' (Rose, 1999: 87). For Rose, it is not the process and tasks of work that are important to giving a sense of meaning to employment, but the relationships formed whilst at work.

Williams also points to this relational aspect of how employment becomes meaningful, adding the interconnections between relationships and the nature of work performed:

For almost every account of work...we come to see that there is never only a work process, of the kind that is usually abstracted: a set of operations on things. There is also, whether recognised or not, a set of social relationships, which in experience are quite inextricable from the work. (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 292)

Williams' analysis takes us outside of the workplace and beyond the work process not only to the 'networks of relationships' at a personal level – with

colleagues, supervisors, managers – that provide meaning, but also to how the work process sits in a broader social organisation of employment itself. This is important when considering the type of social re-organisation of employment implied by policy such as *Valuing People Now* (2009) and *Valuing Employment Now* (2009) and how policy and practice might combine to structure meaning.

Sayers also refers to the relational nature of how employment becomes meaningful and highlights the extent to which employment contributes to a personal 'sense of order' (Sayers in Pahl, 1988: 724). For Sayers, the sense of order conferred by employment permeates many levels of human experience taking effect at a psychological/intellectual level and on the formation of self-esteem and identities (Sayers in Pahl, 1988: 724).

Time and its relationship to employment and the meaning of employment is discussed in both the learning difficulties literature and more widely. Tilley and Graham (2010: 82) point to how locating learning difficulty history in the 'wider social histories of the shifting configurations of time and money associated with consumerism might also allow us to begin a more interconnected problematisation' of the social relations between people with learning difficulties and broader social phenomenon such as employment. In the broader, socio-historical literature Adams explains that the common 'decontextualised value' by which commodities, including labour, can be exchanged is time, 'Not the variable time of seasons, ageing, growth and decay, of fear and pain, joy and play, but the invariable, abstract time of clock, where one hour is the same irrespective of context and emotion' and how this 'allowed work to be translated into money' (Adams, 2002: 18).

Historical research argues that the move to clock time is at the root of industrial capitalism (Thompson, 1967) imposing historically new social and personal

structures and disciplines. Thompson (1967) and Bourdieu (1963) reflect on how 'entrance into the money economy' (Bourdieu, 1963: 42), or finding paid employment, helps individuals define the difference between their own time and time owned by employers, between 'lost time and well filled time' (Bourdieu, 1963: 42), valueless and valuable time. This question is obliquely discussed in learning difficulties studies by O'Connor and Tizard (1956) in their analysis of the (unpaid) employment provided in long-stay institutions. The authors argue that work 'carried out in an atmosphere devoid of incentive' apart from the 'praise and blame from an instructor' (92) reduces work to 'something to do' and of no value to the community or the individuals doing it.

This section considered how the meaning of employment for people with learning difficulties has been interpreted over time in policy and by service providers, and highlighted the relatively underdeveloped nature of the learning difficulties literature analysing employment meanings drawn from the testimony of people with learning difficulties themselves. It discussed the ways in which the broader sociological and cultural studies literature has the potential to provide an analytical framework with which to address this gap in our understanding. The gaps in the literature identified here led to the development of the third research sub-question: What does employment mean to people with learning difficulties?

4. Inclusion, belonging and the identities

At policy level paid employment for people with learning difficulties became central to social inclusion agendas over the period of Labour governments

between 1997 and 2010. This section analyses the literature seeking to define social inclusion and social exclusion, and how the two relate, and considers how theories of social and cultural belonging inform the inclusion-exclusion debate. It discusses the relationships between inclusion and the social identities of people with learning difficulties and how they influence and inform each other. The section also considers the influence of ideas of normalisation and how they link an inclusion process at a social level to individuals.

Defining exclusion, inclusion and belonging

Common to the majority of the many definitions of exclusion is the conceptualisation of individuals or groups of people detached from and marginalised by mainstream society. Inherent in most also is the idea of exclusion as a process (Berghman, 1995; Walker and Walker, 1997: 7). For Combat Poverty, now part of the Irish Government's Office for Social Inclusion, social exclusion means certain groups are pushed to the margins of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, low education or inadequate life skills. This distances them from job, income and education opportunities as well as social and community networks. They have little access to power and decision-making bodies and little chance of influencing decisions or policies that affect them, or of improving living standards. (www.combatpoverty.ie/povertyinireland/glossary.htm; accessed August 23, 2010).

In practice, the ideas of exclusion/inclusion have been researched and used at a policy level in specific contexts. For example: financial – exclusion is strongly associated with poverty; social – excluded individuals and groups being unable to

access mainstream social networks, provision and opportunities; employment – exclusion from the labour market producing individuals and groups with partial and inconsistent employment careers. In *Valuing People Now* (2009) and especially and specifically in *Valuing Employment Now* (2009) the employment element of exclusion/inclusion has been defined as key to dealing with problems associated with the other two.

Discussing an inclusion agenda Barnes and Roulstone state:

Arguably, the shift towards social inclusion discourses has taken critical analysis ever further away from the core issues of social inequality, class divisions and engrained poverty. (Barnes and Roulston, 2005: 3)

The authors point to the ideological nature of an inclusion discourse, suggesting it at best ignores and at worst is an alternative to society attending to the poverty surrounding the experience of disability. However, they also discuss the potential value of elements of an inclusion discourse which, for them, 'have begun to comprehend the multi-factoral influences that lead to social and economic marginalisation' (Barnes and Roulstone, 2005: 3).

The broadly quantitative research of Burchardt et al (1999) cited by Barnes and Roulstone seeks to establish criteria for social inclusion. The definition of exclusion/inclusion constructed from these criteria is:

An individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society but (b) for reasons beyond his or her control he or she cannot

participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society and (c) he or she would like to so participate. (Burchardt et al, 1999: 229)

Burchardt's five criteria of inclusion are as follows:

- 1) Consumption activity; being able to consume at least to some minimum level;
 - 2) Savings activity; accumulating savings, pensions etc.;
 - 3) Production activity; engaging in economically or socially valued activity, excluding the unemployed, long term sick or disabled who are not working, and the early retired;
 - 4) Political activity; engaging in some collective effort to improve or protect social environments;
 - 5) Social activity; engaging in significant social interaction.
- (Burchardt et al, 1999: 230).

A problem with this approach is that it produces degrees of social exclusion, a continuum of relative measures of exclusion and inclusion. Burchardt identifies elements of 'lack of participation' (Burchardt et al, 1999: 230) and in the process defines inclusion as a graduated state of being. On the basis of these criteria it could be argued that people with learning difficulties who have gone through special school, live in supported housing with relatively low rents and outgoings with a liveable income from benefits, and who socialise solely with other people with learning difficulties in segregated but politically active groups are socially

included in terms of consumption, possibly savings, political and social activity, despite being partially or un-employed for a majority of their lives. Focussing 'on outcomes, rather than causes' (Burchardt et al, 1999: 232) limits the potential usefulness an inclusion/exclusion discourse might have (see, for example, Salooje and Richmond 2006, who regards an inclusion discourse as potentially a 'transformative agenda'). This approach is the antithesis of Giddens' structural approach which argues; 'Exclusion is not about graduations of inequality, but about mechanisms that act to detach groups of people from the social mainstream' (Giddens, 1998: 104).

In education, the literature describes inclusive agendas that have broadened to consider how disabled people can be 'included and accepted' (Buckley, 2000). It describes how, in the drive towards inclusive education, 'the Government and education providers must accept that inclusion is as much about the ethos and social life of schools, colleges and university as it is about access to the curriculum' (RNIB 2001: 10). This moves the debate to an analysis of how the micro-cultures of institutions such as, in this case, schools and colleges support a broader sense of social and cultural belonging. This point is reinforced in a wider context as Alcott argues: 'Inclusion is a process not a fixed state. By inclusion, we mean not only that pupils with SEN should wherever possible receive their education in a mainstream school, but also that they should join fully with peers in the curriculum and life of the school' (Alcott , 2002: 27).

Replacing inclusion with belonging is discussed with reference to people with learning difficulties by Johnson and Walmsley (2011). Reviewing of the literature on the nature of belonging and its relevance to the social experiences of people with learning difficulties, the authors capture some of the key differences between the two concepts and point to some of the advantages of thinking in terms of the

broader concept of belonging; 'Abstractions characterize thinking and writing about inclusion and community. Belonging, because it's built on place, memory and relationships, can be more concrete' (Johnson and Walmsley, 2011: 218).

The nature of belonging at a social, cultural and personal level has been explored by several authors. Therborn investigates the 'cultural resources' made available to individuals, arguing that 'people act differently to the extent that their cultures and/or structural location differ' (Therborn, 1991: 188). For Therborn, to belong to a culture means to be part of a 'universe of meaning, and of a particular way of constructing meaning' (Therborn 1991: 183). He offers an analysis of elements of cultural belonging which include 'to have learnt a certain cognitive and communicative competence, a certain language, a certain social horizon, world view, or set of beliefs, a certain way of interpreting or defining situations, of coping with uncertainty and of emitting signals' (Therborn, 1991: 183). Also, 'norms of proper conduct, specific ways of expressing and handling emotions' (Therborn, 1991: 183) are learnt from belonging to specific cultures. One logical conclusion of this is that individuals' 'norms of proper conduct' will differ according to their 'structural location' such that we can ask from this whether students who are structurally located outside of mainstream education are learning different 'norms of conduct' undermining a sense of belonging. The literature suggests this (Working Group on Learning Disabilities and Employment, 2006) and this thesis investigates the question further.

Baumeister and Leary (1995) analyse how cultural influences impact at a personal level. For the authors, belonging is supported by 'strong, stable relationships with other people.' (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 499.) The literature supports the view that the need to belong is inter-dependent, supported by on-going opportunities to give and receive affection, as well as discussing a

broad social need to be an accepted member of a group (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 500). The authors argue that an absence of belonging, resulting from social exclusion, contributes to anxiety, depression, grief, jealousy and loneliness, as well as undermining cognitive development (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 508). The developmental interpretation of belonging is supported by a growing child development literature, which argues that child development analysis 'is now increasingly discussed in terms of seeing the child as part of a system of relationships, with the family, within the extended family, within school and within society (Lewis and Collis 1997; Morris 2001; Sacks et al 1992; Stead, 2001).

This sub-section illustrated potential problems arising from Burchardt's 'lack of participation' (Burchardt et al, 1999: 230) analysis of social inclusion, describing the contribution and potential of the 'included and accepted' (Buckley, 2000) developed in educational studies. This latter approach feeds into the 'more concrete' (Johnson and Walmsley, 2011: 218) concept of belonging, described in depth by, in particular Therborn (1991). The analysis of inclusion offered here informs discussion in sub-section two, concerning identities and how they inform social inclusion.

Identities and inclusion

The final part of this section discusses the relationships between inclusion, belonging and identity. How individuals with learning difficulties perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others has been discussed by numerous commentators (see for example, O'Connor and Tizard, 1956, 1980;

Tizard, 1969; Wolfensberger, 1969, 1980; Todd and Shearn, 1996; Rapley, 2004). A number of theoretical approaches have influenced this debate, including role theory as exemplified in the work of Erving Goffman (see especially 1961). The literature also explores the nature of socially excluded or 'outsider' groups (Goffman 1961, 1990; Cohen, 1982; Taylor 1989; Manning 2008) and how they interact with and are influenced by social frameworks.

Goffman (1961) discusses relationships between social communities and excluded groups and the social roles they are invited to inhabit. He emphasises that social roles require the individual to 'take on the whole array of action encompassed by the corresponding role, so role implies a social determinism and a doctrine about socialisation...Role then is the basic unit of socialisation. It is through roles that tasks in society are allocated and arrangements made to enforce their performance (Goffman 1961: 118). This is critiqued by Giddens (1990) who argues that for most part role theory emphasises the given character of roles. It is the individual's performance in the role which he or she might have some influence over, not the role itself. 'Role analysis hence often tends to perpetuate the action/structure dualism so engrained in social theory: society supplies the roles to which actors adapt as best they might' (Giddens, 1990: 116). For Giddens, role theory largely discounts the active input of individuals. At best, individuals negotiate the nature of their performance of a particular role, not challenge the nature of that role itself.

Role theory has always been central to the development of the principles of 'normalisation' and the later social role valorisation (SRV) (Lemay, 1999: 222), both of which continue to influence thinking about and service delivery for people with learning difficulties. Quoting Wolfensberger, Lemay argues, in support of SRV:

The social role may be defined as a socially expected pattern of behaviours, responsibilities, expectations and privileges' (Wolfensberger, 1992: 13) People learn expected responsibilities of a role...Persons may enter into social roles through choice, because of their competencies or by imposition. (Lemay, 1999: 222)

The purpose of strategies associated with SRV is to emphasise the positive roles people with learning difficulties may have or might be supported towards (Thomas and Wolfensberger cited in Flynn and Lemay 1999: 125). Osborne (2006) points to the two major contributions of SRV, that people with valued roles will be 'accorded desirable things' (2006: 9) and that the 'two major means to creation, support and defence of valued social roles are to enhance both a person's image and competency' (Osborne, 2006: 9).

In contrast to role analysis, Rapley provides an interpretation of identity construction: 'Identity categories – and disability categories no less – are essentially fluid. The import of this is that a person's "toxic" identity is no less worked-up than another person's "normal" identity; that "passing as ordinary" is no less an interactionally occasioned judgement than is "being intellectually disabled"' (Rapley, 2004: 139). Rapley analyses identities as 'essentially mutable and contingent discursive formations' (Rapley, 2004: 17), which are 'made in and for specific interactional contexts to do local, situated work in the management of self'. (Rapley, 2004: 70). This analysis is shared in general terms elsewhere in sociology and philosophy (Giddens, 1984, 1990, 1991; Callinicos, 1995, 2006; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Giddens argues for an understanding of identities as things 'routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the

individual' (Giddens, 1991: 52). Rapley draws out how intellectual and social 'competence' is a 'relative concept, and moreover one which is in actual social processes, actively negotiated' (Rapley, 2004: 202). Giddens contributes to this debate discussing identity types:

A social identity carries with it a certain range...of prerogatives and obligations that an actor who is accorded that identity...may activate or carry out: these prerogatives and obligations constitute the role-prescriptions associated with that position. A social identity is essentially a category, or a typification, made on the basis of some definite social criterion. (Giddens, 1990: 117)

This approach has relevance for people with learning difficulties, for whom highly structured social criterion, discussed in Chapter 1, construct social identities. Giddens' theory of structuration helps explain how actors may seek to influence this identity 'typification' in a more highly conceptualised way than Rapley's 'essentially fluid' formulation quoted above. How and to what extent actors may influence their social identities is itself informed by the influence of the 'naturalised views...the core of oppression' (Goodley and Rapley, 2001: 213). This tension is analysed in Chapter 8: 'Employment, inclusion and negotiating identities'. The fluid interpretations of identities developed by Giddens and Rapley offer a critique of the 'action/structure dualism' (Giddens 1990: 116) which that author argues is central to and perpetuated by the idea at the centre of SRV that role is the 'basic unit of socialisation' (Goffman, 1961: 118). The analysis of identity offered by Giddens and Rapley suggests a means by which actors can

begin to impact upon structure, to shape the roles and the process of socialisation itself, not simply the performance of role offered by role theory.

Wolfensberger describes the negative ways people with learning difficulties are perceived by the community and how in the process of this a person may be become 'devalued, or 'deviant' (Wolfensberger, 1980 :120). Normalisation understands this 'deviancy' as a social construct, something an historically specific society and culture imposes onto people with learning difficulties. In order to address this, normalisation calls for a meeting in the middle between the 'deviant' group and an excluding society, with people with learning difficulties being supported to perform their social roles differently in order to fit in while society lowers its barriers by finding ways to accommodate the 'deviant' group (Wolfensberger, 1980). As Wolfensberger warned, in practice the pressure to change is felt more keenly by people with learning difficulties, 'while the work of changing societal perceptions and values...is neglected' (Wolfensberger, 1980 :122).

Research illustrates the largely negative way in which the ideas of normalisation and SRV inform supported employment schemes (Wilson, 2003). This author argues that supported work schemes seek to develop an 'as "normal" a worker as possible' in order to reduce "'devalued behaviours" in the workplace' (Wilson, 2003: 113). For Wilson, employment support schemes – informed by SRV and normalisation ideas – invite people with learning difficulties to attempt to hide their 'differentness' (Wilson, 2003: 111). In order to explore the issues raised here – that of identity negotiation, identities associated with social roles and how these impact upon the nature of inclusion offered by employment – the fourth research sub-question is: Do social identities affect how inclusive employment can be?

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that a central conceptual tension with which learning difficulties studies must grapple in the policy climate of the twenty-first century is that between socio-historical 'naturalised views' which construct people with learning difficulties as passive, social burdens for whom employment is a foreign land, and policy agendas that describe employment as central to their future well-being and social inclusion. It discussed the historical tendencies which have shaped the way people with learning difficulties are educated and trained for employment, how 'vocational' and 'educational' approaches have been adopted at different times and by different agencies and how these approaches have framed and been framed by social and political attitudes towards people with learning difficulties. I have described the historical and conceptual analysis of employment for people with learning difficulties carried in the learning difficulty literature and have suggested that ideas from beyond learning difficulties studies may be adapted to address important gaps in the learning difficulty literature. Policy and practice up to 2010 has sought to construct employment as a medium of exchange, a process of transition for people with learning difficulties from the excluded world of learning difficulties into the included world of mainstream employment. Therefore, it is appropriate that the thesis draws on sociological and cultural studies literatures which seek to explain the world into which people with learning difficulties are being invited, in order to conceptualise more clearly the problems they face and seek out strategies which might support them.

The significance of analysis which defines people with learning difficulties in terms of being a social burden, incapable of maintaining employment is stigmatising and undermines an analysis of how people with learning difficulties contribute to and shape their own experience. This is challenged by research which supports people to express their own views (discussed in Chapter 3). This produces a more diverse picture of people as active participants in a social inclusion agenda based on employment. In Chapter 3 I develop this theme by examining how different methodological approaches might include people with learning difficulties in the research process.

Chapter 3: Methodology: How the study was undertaken and why this approach was taken

Introduction

This research explores what employment means for people with learning difficulties through an analysis of the recollections and perceptions of both people with learning difficulties and service providers. Three principal data sources were collected and analysed: oral history interviews with people with learning difficulties; oral history interviews with service providers; documentary research exploring the history of community-based employment for people with learning difficulties since World War Two, alongside an analysis of the policy context for this employment in the 21st century. The latter is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

In this chapter I discuss the methodological choices that supported an exploration of the themes and research questions raised in Chapter 2. This chapter provides a rationale for my mixed method approach (a combination of semi-structured and 'loosely guided' (Charmaz, 2007: 26) oral history interviews, supplemented by documentary sources) and explores key methodological issues in research with people with learning difficulties. It links the overall research aim (the development of an analysis of the employment of people with learning difficulties) to a discussion of the literature on qualitative, narrative-based research which seeks to 'find ways of giving people with learning difficulties a voice' (Walmsley, 1995: 52).

The chapter is divided into two main sections. Section 1 outlines methodological concerns, described in the learning difficulties and other methodological

literature, which informed my choice of methods. Section 2, Research Strategies, describes in detail how the research was carried out.

1. A review of the methodological literature that informed my methods choices

Issues of research ownership

Section 1 discusses how the research sought to involve participants in the research process. It analyses the literature of research approaches developed in disability studies and in learning difficulties studies in particular. Two key themes are discussed: the limitations on how inclusive PhD research can be; and the nature of the support research participants with learning difficulties should receive.

As Chapters 1 and 2 explain, I chose the research topic of the employment of people with learning difficulties as a result of a combination of three areas of concern. Firstly, I identified it as an issue during my employment as a youth worker working with young people with learning difficulties. Secondly, I became aware of an increasingly focussed policy agenda which had by 2009 resulted in the first policy document in UK history of people with learning difficulties expressly addressing their employment needs and potential. Finally, my interest emerged from an analysis of the literature of the historical construction of employment for people with learning difficulties as discussed in Chapter 2. At an early stage of the research I also made a key decision regarding the broad methodological approach – oral history interviews – again from a combination of

previous familiarity with some of its methods, but also because oral history had generated seminal employment studies as detailed in the literature discussed in Chapter 2. I discuss the strengths and challenges of using an oral history approach below.

The researcher expressing ownership of the research project in this way is controversial in the learning difficulties research context where the question of ownership of research and research relationships are key methodological considerations. Research approaches addressing the question of ownership and seeking to provide frameworks for research relationships continue to develop in the literature, grouped under the heading 'inclusive research' (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003). The literature illustrates the potentially contested nature of research ownership using inclusive methods, reflecting upon the complexities of ensuring the engagement of people with learning difficulties in the research process (Williams and Simon, 2005; Abell et al 2007; McClimens 2007). Aspis highlights potential power imbalances in relationships between the professional historian/researcher and people with learning difficulties, arguing that people with learning difficulties should lead on writing about their own histories, including choosing which aspects of that history to write about and the methodological tools to be employed (Aspis, 2000). Aspis has been criticised for downplaying the heterogeneous nature of learning difficulties and ignoring the multiple discourses that contribute to learning difficulty history (Jackson 2000). However, the relationships between historian/researcher and the research participants in this project, in particular those with learning difficulties, were a central concern given that it sought to be as inclusive as possible. The first part of section 1 below examines the literature which supported this research aim and explores the tensions between a research aim of developing inclusive research and completing a PhD project. Section 1 concludes by looking at the literature

discussing the advantages and challenges of supporting research participants with learning difficulties in interview.

Walmsley and Johnson (2003) outlined five principles underlying research approaches grouped under the heading 'inclusive research'. Emancipatory and participatory research approaches are included in this group. The principles of inclusive research state that as far as possible research should be owned by disabled people; should further the interests of disabled people with researchers as their allies; should involve people with learning difficulties in the research process; should ensure disabled people have some control over the process; should produce accessible and/or collaboratively written reports (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003). The emancipatory research approach is more insistent on research being owned by disabled people (Barnes, 2005). The development of this research approach is closely associated with the rise of the disability movement in the UK, and became established during the 1990s. It insists on the research process being controlled by organisations of disabled people, who choose research topics, source and control research funding and select research methodologies (see for example Oliver, 1992; Zarb, 1992). The learning difficulties literature discusses the problems associated with emancipatory research in the learning difficulty context (Walmsley and Johnson, 2003; Walmsley, 2001; Riddell et al, 2001; Chappell, 2000). For example, Riddell et al argue:

Attempting to fulfil [emancipatory] criteria with...people with learning difficulties is more complex. The expertise of the researcher...is not transmissible to some people with cognitive impairments; the involvement of people...may similarly be limited. (2001: 224)

Participatory research has been described as 'a useful compromise, a step towards emancipatory research' (Chappell, 2000: 36). Using this approach, researchers work in partnership with participants using qualitative methods to develop interpretations and explanations of data. Cocks and Cockram (1995) describe the characteristics of participatory research as follows:

- The research problem may be identified by disabled people or non-disabled researchers, who then bring it to the attention of the constituency of disabled people;
- Disabled people and researchers work together to achieve a collective analysis of the research problem;
- Alliances are formed between disabled people, researchers and other experts, under the control and primarily in the interests of disabled people.

(Cocks and Cockram, 1995: 28)

The learning difficulties literature recognises that using inclusive research approaches in the course of a dissertation is problematic (Bjornsdottir and Svensdottir, 2008). These authors point to the facts that doctoral dissertations are formally owned by those writing it and the universities supporting them and therefore cannot be owned by research participants; that PhDs are in most cases unlikely to influence policy makers and professionals; and that universities funding PhD research set doctoral guidelines, largely excluding research

participants from this process (Bjornsdottir and Svendsdottir, 2008: 265). The authors conclude that 'doctoral projects...can most likely never be fully inclusive' (Bjornsdottir and Svendsdottir, 2008: 266) but may strive towards the fullest inclusion possible.

Drawing on the five principles set out by Walmsley and Johnson (2003) my research can be considered partially inclusive in a number of ways. The research aspires to serve the interests of people with learning difficulties in identifying current barriers to them becoming employed. As discussed in Section 2 below, interviews were 'loosely structured' and strove to involve and give control of the interview process as much as possible to participants. Accessible interview materials, including accessible background papers on the aims and methods of research were produced (see Appendices 2 and 3) though it is unlikely that it will be possible to produce an accessible version of the final thesis report. However, as noted above, the formal ownership of the project remains in the hands of the researcher and the supporting university.

A second important consideration of the research was to what extent and how research participants with learning difficulties should be supported during the interview process. The rest of this sub-section examines techniques for supporting research participants with learning difficulties and arguments for adopting a naturalistic approach based on the development of 'rapport' (Charmaz, 2007; Booth and Booth, 1994).

Research with and about people with learning difficulties has highlighted many of the advances – as well as the challenges – of using a range of visual elicitation methods, for example 'Talking Mats', as an 'effective communication resource' (Murphy and Cameron, 2008; see also Germain, 2004). Dockrell, commenting on advances such as these, draws our attention to the idea that 'modifications' in the

ways in which qualitative data is collected through interview need to be 'evaluated in terms of any different or additional demands or biases that are introduced' (Finlay and Lyons, 2002 cited in Dockrell, 2004). In other words, researchers need to be aware of the potential ways in which changing the interview context – by providing a framework for communication – might affect data collected.

Rapley explores the often unnoticed communication abilities of people with learning difficulties. For example, commenting on the commonly held idea that 'intellectual limitations predispose people to bias responding' (Shaw and Budd, 1982: 108 cited in Rapley, 2005: 82) Rapley argues that 'acquiescent responses turn out in practice to resemble a variety of conversational strategies with which the person with an intellectual disability manages threatening, situationally peculiar or bizarre questions' (Rapley, 2004: 82). Drawing on his analysis of a number of formal interview encounters between researchers and people with learning difficulties Rapley provides examples of researchers misunderstanding encounters based on the assumptions many have regarding the limited communication skills of people with learning difficulties (Rapley, 2005: 88). In other words, it may be that people with learning difficulties have a range of subtle ways of responding to questions whilst maintaining their own sense of identity and actively communicating in conversations without being appreciated or understood by researchers. Part of the overall research aim of this project was to capture this. I comment further on this below.

Research draws attention to the impact of social contexts on participant communicability (Tizard, 1964; Hatton, 1998 cited in Rapley, 2005: 89; Dockrell, 2004). Researchers have developed the more specific idea that interview spaces inform communicability (Jones et al, 2008; Brown and Durrhein, 2009) and this

research draws on these ideas. Research into the memory and language capabilities of people with learning difficulties cautions care when attempting to over-simplify communication methods in interview situations to accommodate any assumed lack of ability (Dockrell, 2004).

This body of work questions the use of supportive techniques for participants with learning difficulties and points towards an approach focussed on developing a sense of 'rapport' (Booth and Booth, 1996). The rapport approach used in the learning difficulty context also has the advantage of being based on an analysis which understands the communication skills people with learning difficulties have as a social construct (Rapley, 2004). The approach is widely used in research with non-disabled participants (Charmaz, 2007) and so is appropriate and offers a measure of standardisation of interview approach for this project which includes participants both with and without learning difficulties. A central problem of the 'rapport' approach in learning difficulties research is the danger of interview roles becoming confused with advocacy relationships, particularly given the inclusive research principle that researchers are allies (Walmsley, 1994: 90). It was important to develop reflexive ways of remaining mindful of this and these are discussed below.

This sub-section considered two themes: the limitations of how inclusive PhD research projects can be and how supporting participants with learning difficulties in the interview process adds to and detracts from research. It concluded that PhD research in the majority of cases can at best move towards inclusive practice without achieving full inclusion, chiefly as a result of the research ultimately being owned by PhD students and their supporting universities and not research participants. Secondly, the section concluded that for the purpose of this study, developing formal ways of supporting participants with learning

difficulties during interviews was not appropriate. For these reasons the following key decisions were made:

- I owned the research;
- The research should develop ways of being as inclusive as possible, within the context of acknowledging that this would be limited;
- The project would not use formal ways of supporting participants with learning difficulties during interviews;
- The same general interview approach – of open and appropriately supportive questioning – would be adopted for all interview participants, with and without learning difficulties.

The challenges of interviewing people with learning difficulties

This section examines the nature of interview approaches used when working with people with learning difficulties. It considers the nature of the data collected during interview. It investigates the concept of theoreticity and its relevance when interviewing students with learning difficulties, and at an interviewer's use of language.

An interview is a directed conversation (Lofland and Lofland, 1984) with the basic framework based on researchers asking questions and listening, and participants answering (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). In-depth interviews can elicit each person's interpretation of her or his experiences concerning specific topics (Charmaz, 2007: 25). A qualitative interview is contextual and negotiated and seeks to gather 'definitions of terms, situations and events' (Charmaz, 2007: 32) in order to explore the assumptions and the meanings participants ascribe to experience. Interview participants are viewed as meanings makers, not passive conduits for

retrieving information, who are likely to 'constructively add to, take away from and transform the facts and details' during an interview (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997: 111). In this sense, interview stories do not reproduce prior realities (Silverman, 2000). Rather, stories are accounts from particular points of view that serve a wide range of purposes (Charmaz, 2007: 27) including maintaining a sense of self during the course of the interview (Rapley, 2004).

A common component of the interview is to ask participants to recall an event or a situation they have been involved in or witnessed. The learning difficulty literature shows that the human ability to do this is well developed, even in children as young as three or four under some conditions (Poole and Lindsay, 2001). Children with mild learning difficulties performed as well as their age-matched peers in recall tests, while children with moderate learning difficulties performed less well (Henry and Gudjonsson, 1999 cited in Dockrell, 2004: 162). The literature highlights key points of difference during interview between children and young people with and those without learning difficulties (Silverman, 1981, 1983, 1985; Goodley and Clough, 2004; Ward, 1997). In this regard, this research drew on the concept of 'theoreticity' (Silverman, 1983). Silverman developed this through research into the relationships between young people with learning difficulties and care professionals. As used by Silverman, theoreticity highlights the fact that a citizen's rights and duties depend upon being treated as a person who, in principle, can recognise common-sense situations of choice and make reasonable decisions. At varying ages, children may be recognised as theoretic actors who are able to make rational decisions. However, 'Theoreticity may be withheld even when this age is attained, provided there is evidence of a certain level of mental handicap or illness' (Silverman, 1983: 255).

Silverman argues that young people with learning difficulties' access to conversational and other roles may be denied to them by adults, shaping and limiting their social interaction. In preparing to interview students with learning difficulties I was mindful that participants may have experienced theoreticity being withheld, and may have had interactional skills informed by this experience. It was important to be aware of this interactional process of exclusion in order to seek to ensure maximum inclusion in the interviews during this research, to work on the basis of interview participants having the ability to make reasonable choices about how they wished to present themselves and their histories.

The literature highlights associations made between language problems and learning difficulties (Facon et al 2002; Frazier, Norbury and Bishop 2003; Dockrell, 2004: 164). As a result the nature of language and grammatical constructions used when interviewing people with learning difficulties needed careful consideration. This was not to prepare a simplified version of interview (Dockrell, 2004: 162) but to take an awareness of the nature of learning difficulties and language use into the 'relational context' (Rapley, 2004) of interviews. Guided by this I sought to ensure that questions put to participants with learning difficulties were constructed in accessible ways. (See below for a list of questions put to students with learning difficulties.)

This section looked at general considerations of the process of interviewing and at examples of special considerations when interviewing people with learning difficulties. It highlighted the need to include participants as individuals capable of rational choice, while being mindful of the interviewer's use of language. The section below examines the interview methods used, exploring the ways in which narrative research methodologies support research participants in finding a voice. It assesses the strengths and challenges of an oral history approach in

developing an analysis of the relationships between employment and people with learning difficulties.

Learning difficulties research, narrative histories and oral history

This sub-section examines narrative based research methodologies, focussing on oral history research approaches. It analyses three key aspects of this approach: oral history and its dialogic nature; how oral history explores the relationship between individuals and society; and considers the subjective nature of oral history data.

Narrative-based research methods include autobiographical, life history and oral history approaches. In learning difficulties studies these have been developed as part of a process of history gathering and writing, 'reclaiming' (Atkinson, 1998: 73) and discovering a history of the 'lost voices' (Atkinson and Walmsley, 1999: 203) of people with learning difficulties. They have evolved since the late 1980s, accompanying the rise of the self-advocacy movement in 'a quieter though equally revolutionary way' (Atkinson, 1998: 73). Narrative histories offer a unique, and double-sided research approach, providing access both to 'more history' – filling in gaps not captured by documentation – and 'anti history', providing an alternative version of historical events, challenging versions described by documentary records (Frisch, 1990).

Autobiography, life history and oral history approaches each seek to gather and write history at two levels – at the personal and socio-historical. Each approach has its specific strengths. For some, autobiography holds 'the greatest potential for self-representation' (Atkinson and Walmsley, 1999: 209), providing a way in

which individuals can 'make sense of their life and at the same time claim a self identity which is authentic rather than constructed by more powerful others' (Atkinson and Walmsley, 1999: 209). Typically, the role of the interviewer in autobiographical research is to act as 'scribe' or 'ghost writer' (Atkinson, 1998: 74). Life history approaches are summarised by Armstrong: 'The complete life history attempts to cover the entire sweep of the subject's life experience. It is inevitably long, many sided and complex'. (Armstrong, 1982 quoted in Walmsley 2006: 185).

Oral history is 'in its pure form, a more focused approach' (Walmsley, 2006: 185). The techniques and methods of oral history offer a unique way of exploring social and historical contexts (Walmsley and Atkinson, in Bornat et al, 2000: 186). They allow the researcher to explore relationships between individuals and groups, to interrogate the 'active social process' (Thomson, 2000: 163) through which participants may be 'constructing and telling collective and individual' memories (Thomson, 2000: 163). As Thompson shows, oral history can investigate areas ignored, in so doing 'transforming the "objects" of study into "subjects"' (Thompson, 1988: 99). Oral history sources are not 'the raw voice of the past calling through the years, but a complex interplay of memory and social interaction with the interviewer' (Rolph, 2006: 86).

Oral history is 'dialogic' in a dual sense, both as a dialogue with the past mediated by memory, and as a dialogue in the data gathering process itself (Bornat, 2008: 344-5). 'Oral history is a dialogic discourse, created not only by what the interviewees say, but also by what historians do – by the historian's presence in the field and by the historian's presentation of the material' (Portelli 1998). In light of this, and Rapley's analysis outlined above, the active role of the researcher is an important feature to be conscious of and reflected upon. In order

to remain mindful of this during this project it was important to continually draw upon the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis.

The central research aim of this thesis was to investigate whether employment is a vehicle for the inclusion of people with learning difficulties into society, to investigate the nature of relationships and the relationships possible between people with learning difficulties, employment and others without learning difficulties. As Chapter 2 explains, the research also sought to capture the active input of people with learning difficulties into this process, the dialogue between people with learning difficulties and society. An oral history approach supports an analysis of how people perceive themselves both as individuals and as part of groups. With a broad collection of data oral history can provide us with a 'cross-section of the subjectivity of a social group or class', telling us not just what individuals did but what they and groups 'wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did' (Portelli 1981: 99). Portelli develops this idea further, offering a warning with regard to analysis built on the memories of actors alone, who may recount stories that 'emphasise not how history went, but how it could, or should have gone' (1988: 46).

Research discusses the democratic nature of oral history, of its potential to 'redistribute intellectual authority' (Frisch, 1990: xxi) undermining social hierarchies through a process of returning history to those individuals and social groups who made it (Fraser, 1981: 52), in effect challenging the power structures Aspis and others have highlighted. (Aspis, 2000). These elements are relevant to people with learning difficulties.

Oral history has had a long and data rich relationship with labour history (see Saville, 1972; Thompson, 1988 especially: 72-101). For the American oral

historian and broadcaster Studs Terkel writing in, *Working*, labour history is inherently about:

Violence – to the spirit as well as the body. It is about ulcers as well as accidents, about shouting matches as well as fistfights, about nervous breakdowns as well as kicking the dog around...It is about a search, too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying. (Terkel, 2004: xi)

For Terkel, employment oral history captures this, recording both a daily material struggle to survive and the reflections on that struggle. In that sense, employment history is both an objective collection of work acts and a subjective process of constructing meaning from them which stretches beyond simply an understanding of those acts and as a result beyond the workplace, to explore 'the normal experience of work and its impact on the family and community' (Thompson, 2006: 29). In this sense, employment oral history captures social communication, describing which elements of our own working experience 'we can make common with others' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 282).

The subjectivity of oral history interviews has been described as its 'unique and precious element' (Portelli, 1981: 67) providing oral sources with a 'different credibility' (Portelli, 1981: 100) with which to discover and explore meanings. Oral history has been criticised frequently on the basis of its lack of objectivity and empirical validity in a field of study which has come to privilege the written word and written historical records (James, 2006: 85; see also Thompson, 1988: 22-

72). A critical approach to written records and a growing appreciation of the 'unique status' (James, 2006: 85) of the knowledge generated by oral sources has re-established its value.

The nature of that credibility has been fleshed out in the literature drawing on a feminist analysis of interviews with women (Anderson and Jacks, 2006). Much of this insight is also useful in the learning difficulties context. The subjective nature of oral history interviews can make the researcher aware of the culture, norms, assumptions and contexts of interviews. Anderson draws attention to the 'internalised cultural boundaries' of the interviewer her/himself (Anderson, 2006: 134). By this she indicates there may be a tacit acceptance by interviewers that interviews should explore certain areas for specific purposes – like for example gathering 'objective' facts about participants' lives – but should not explore feelings.

Beyond the oral history literature Rapley develops this idea with regard to research interviews with people with learning difficulties which may completely ignore the subjective input and interpretations of interview situations people with learning difficulties make as a result of the culturally bounded assumptions some interviewers have (Rapley, 2004: 53). Walmsley also comments on the assumptions once inherent in much learning difficulties research, with data often reflecting 'expected behaviour rather than real behaviour' as a consequence of culturally bounded assumptions (Walmsley, 1995: 74). However, it is argued here that it is in feelings that the 'idiosyncratic interaction between self-image and cultural norms' (Jacks, 2006: 137) are expressed. Within the subjectively expressed self-reflection at the heart of oral history interviews lies an individual's relationship with culture and society. As Jacks argues: 'The categories and concepts we use for reflecting on ourselves come from a cultural context' (Jacks,

2006: 136) and, when working with people with learning difficulties, a cultural context that has historically demeaned those people bearing that label. The subjectivity of oral history, in shifting the interview emphasis from information gathering to facilitating the 'dynamic unfolding' (Jacks, 2006: 140) of the participant's viewpoint can begin to challenge these cultural assumptions (Anderson, 2006: 133).

As discussed in Chapter 2, this thesis seeks to explore the question of social belonging. In its exploration of inner feelings and individual perceptions oral history methods add to this. An oral history approach moves beyond objectively defined states of social inclusion – which might be understood and measured simply by an individual having a job – to an holistic investigation of a subjectively perceived sense of social belonging. The employment focus of this research investigates how far employment contributes to people with learning difficulties acquiring the 'cultural resources' (Therborn, 1991: 188) necessary to develop a sense of belonging. This might be understood and measured not simply by the objective fact of employment, but rather by the subjectively perceived sense of belonging in the workplace, by the extent to which individuals are 'included and accepted' (Buckley, 2000).

Oral history's dialogic nature, potential to explore the relationships between individuals, groups and society, and its subjectivity supports the research aim of investigating to what extent employment can act as a means of social inclusion and cultural belonging for people with learning difficulties. Having investigated methodologies for collecting and beginning an analysis of data, the next section interrogates the grounded theory data analysis approach used in this thesis.

Data analysis: Grounded theory

This sub-section examines the strengths and challenges associated with grounded theory. It illustrates how the approach helps to organise data collection and analysis. It discusses grounded theory's interpretation of research participants as active, meanings makers and how this fits in with other conceptual approaches adopted by the thesis. It concludes by discussing situational maps, their value and use during this research project.

My data analysis draws on the theories and methodologies of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). This has become the most widely used framework for analysing qualitative data and the most influential model for qualitative research in the social sciences (Denzin 1997). It was conceived as a way of generating theory through data rather than testing hypotheses determined in advance of data collection. It is associated with inductive reasoning, due to its focus on theory generation from data but is also an iterative approach, requiring researchers to move between theory and data throughout the process of research (Bryman 2001). The defining practices of grounded theory practice include:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis;
- Constructing analytical codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses;
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis;

- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis;
- Memo writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories and identify gaps;
- Sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness;
- Conducting the literature review after developing an independent analysis.

(Charmaz, 2007: 5-6)

This project used this analysis approach throughout, apart from the final point relating to conducting the literature review. Delaying the literature review is a contentious issue. Originally it was suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1999) as a way of freeing researchers from the 'received wisdom' of prior knowledge. The authors have subsequently qualified their position such that grounded theory opinion on prior knowledge remains ambiguous with an on-going debate on the subject (Charmaz, 2007: 165).

Central to the use of grounded theory is Strauss's contention that humans are 'active agents in their lives' rather than passive recipients of larger social forces (Charmaz, 2007: 7). Strauss argued that process, not structure, was fundamental to human existence, that human beings created structures through engaging in processes (Strauss, 1998). This contention relates well to the conceptual approach developed in Chapter 2, centring on Giddens' theoretical analysis of agency-structure relationships. Applying an 'active agents' approach to an analysis of people with learning difficulties may also begin to challenge social

stereotypes which often portray them as at the mercy of larger social forces beyond their influence.

As illustrated above, there are a number of different interpretations of grounded theory such that no single framework exists. This can be seen both as a weakness and strength since it allows individual researchers flexibility to develop the best methodological strategy for purpose (Corbin and Holt, 2005: 50). As a result of this on-going debate a number of issues have arisen of relevance to this study and the approach taken. One such issue is that of developing rapport with participants. There has been criticism of early Glaser and Strauss 'smash and grab' data collection techniques (Dey, 1999) which eschew the possibility of developing longer term research relationships. This study set out to develop respectful relationships over time and through repeat interviews, enabling the researcher to develop an understanding of participants' lives from their own perspectives (Walmsley, 1995; Charmaz, 2007).

In an attempt to more clearly represent developing theory as they move between coding and memo writing, grounded theorists have developed 'situational maps' (see for example, Clarke, 2003). Situational maps graphically represent the spread of the potentially disparate elements of data, providing a means by which analysis can move to and fro between the general and abstract to the specific and concrete, from a 'messy/working version' to an 'ordered/working version' (Clarke, 2003: 561 to 564). The maps also have the potential to articulate the 'sites of silence' (Clarke, 2003: 561) in the data, those aspects of the data which are sensed as present but remain unarticulated. This research developed a number of such maps, examples of which are included (see Appendices 7 and 8).

Conclusion

Section 1 discussed methodological concerns drawn in large part from the learning difficulties literature, an analysis of which informed my methods choices. It investigated the challenges of interviewing people with learning difficulties and described the potential for qualitative, narrative-based research to address these challenges, highlighting the strengths of an oral history approach. The section concluded by examining the ways in which grounded theory analysis supplements and supports the methodological and conceptual approaches taken in this thesis.

Key themes emerged from this analysis. Although PhD research projects can aspire to be fully inclusive, this proves in practice to be difficult, especially given the nature of who owns the research. The result of this for my research is that the project sought to devise ways of maximising its inclusive nature and these are described fully in section 2 below. Section 1 argued against the use of visual elicitation and other interview support techniques in this project, primarily on the basis that such techniques may, for the purpose of this research, skew data.

The section set out the basic attitudinal approach taken when interviewing people with learning difficulties. This meant that the research actively strove to accept participants as theoretic actors, that is as individuals capable of rational choice in the ways that they presented themselves. Participants were seen as actively contributing to the construction of interview encounters and this approach was supported by the underlying principles of the oral history approach used. The strengths of that approach discussed above – its dialogic nature, potential to explore the relationships between individuals, groups and society, and its

subjectivity – support a number of research aims, including the exploration of the relationship between active agents and the social structures that govern them. The section finishes by examining how data analysis – grounded theory – supports and augments these aims.

Having set out general considerations and underlying research approaches, section 2 discusses how my research put them into practice by describing the process of data collection and analysis.

2. Research strategies: data collection and analysis

Introduction

The following section provides a detailed description of the methods and strategies used to collect and analyse data to support an analysis of the employment of people with learning difficulties. It is divided into seven sub-sections: Finding research participants and access to interviewees; participant groups; interview strategies; data analysis; archival research; ethical issues; managing challenges in the field.

Finding research participants and access to interviewees

Finding research participants was supported by the fact that I had worked for many years in the London borough of Camden, where this research was carried

out. Over a period of seven years many working relationships with other service providers were developed. Therefore, when my research began many people were available to provide advice and guidance on possible interview participants and local issues. Participants were sought via: a letter of invitation to participate circulated in specialist media; personal contacts and 'gatekeepers' (Broadhead and Rist, 1976) at voluntary sector provision, Day Centres and other Local Authority provision; personal contacts for participants without learning difficulties; personal contacts and 'gatekeepers' in Further Education College and other student-based employment support services. Numbers of participants found using each of the above methods, apart from the letter of invitation, were increased dramatically as a result of 'snowballing' (Heckathorn, 1997) from already known contacts.

An initial attempt to find participants was based on a letter of invitation circulated through service provider media and via some personal networks previously established. (See Appendix 2 for a copy of this letter). The Camden Society is a leading voluntary sector organisation providing a range of support services for people with learning difficulties, including employment support, in Camden and elsewhere across London. As a Local Authority service provider I had collaborated with the organisation over many years and they included this letter in the autumn 2008 edition of their newsletter sent to all of their members. Personal contacts at Camden's Adult Learning Disability Service took and circulated the letter. It was also circulated to students on courses for people with learning difficulties at one of the research sites, Kingsway College, again thanks to a personal contact at the college. As a result, the research project first became publicly known to potential research participants via a small group of individuals known and 'respected' (Day, 2008: 50) both by services users and other service providers in Camden's learning difficulty community. Ultimately the letter directly

provided no research participants, although a small number of service providers said they had read it. In this research a written invite to participate was ineffective. This may have been because the emphasis in the letter was on participants contacting me in order to be involved. This may have been beyond the capacities of the participants who read it. It may also be that appropriate support was not available from the support services through whose media the letter was circulated.

Participants with learning difficulties using adult services initially resulted from personal contacts developed through previous working collaborations with the Camden Society. I was known by the Society's administrators and recognised by many of the Society's service users conferring partial 'insider' status (Day, 2008: 50; Charmaz, 2007:14). As a result many Camden Society staff and service users agreed to participate. More participants with learning difficulties resulted from personal contacts in Local Authority provision and 'snowballing' from them. Three participants from the Shootup Hill Day Centre resulted from this. Working through the centre manager, as wide a sample as possible was sought, largely dependent on the centre manager's choice of individuals he thought suitable, informed by the selection criteria that they should have some experience of employment and should be able to consent to participating without support. Broadhead and Rist (1976) point to the dual nature of 'gatekeepers' with their capacity to both facilitate and control access to participants. This research project experienced such individuals in the majority of cases in a positive, enabling way.

Personal contacts were central to finding participants without learning difficulties who worked for the Local Authority. Participants from the Youth and Connexions service working with young people with learning difficulties and from the then Children, Schools and Families department locally resulted from personal

contacts. Another subset of potential interview participants became available as a result of interviewing Viv, a key informant (Reiger, 2007). Viv has a long history of working in the borough stretching back to the mid 1970s, is well known and highly regarded by many service providers and service users. Many subsequent research participants with knowledge of the history of Camden's provision resulted from Viv's interview.

Students were drawn from four areas of provision – courses at two Further Education (FE) colleges, one specialist voluntary sector-run educational provision and a voluntary sector-run employment support agency. Viv directed me towards a tutor at one of the FE colleges, the rest of the agencies were approached on the basis of previous working relationships. Having worked in the borough there was a danger that previous working relationships with young people might impact on research, skewing interpretations of the 'basic social processes' being observed (Charmaz, 2007: 20). As a result, service providers in colleges and other employment support provision were asked to select groups of interview participants on my behalf. As with Day Centre gatekeepers, I relied on tutors and support workers in FE and other employment services to choose as wide a sample of participants as possible. The criteria provided were that the group should draw on the rich cultural mix of the borough of Camden, with an equal spread of male and female participants. As explained in more detail below, in practice this resulted in whole classes agreeing to participate at both FE colleges and at the specialist educational provision – the Leighton Project – while a smaller group was selected with the criteria in mind at *Access 2 Employment*, the Camden Society's employment support service.

This sub-section has detailed the four methods used to find participants. It has reflected on the effectiveness of methods and has shown that all research

participants resulted from personal contacts and 'snowballing', with the advice and guidance of a number of key informants and 'gatekeepers'. It was concluded that written invitations to participate, though circulated widely in appropriate media, was ineffective.

Participant groups

This sub-section describes the three groups of research participants. These are: students with learning difficulties in post-16 education or accessing employment support services; Day Centre members with learning difficulties; service providers.

Students

Students were chosen from three post-16 education facilities and one employment support provider. It was important the study did not simply concentrate on students in Further Education (FE) institutions in order to prevent the study becoming simply an assessment of FE, and to maintain the research focus on, primarily, young people not in employment across a range of education and employment support service settings. The four agencies through which I contacted student participants were:

- *Access 2 Employment*: an employment support agency for students with learning difficulties run by the Camden Society;

- **Leighton Project:** a post-16 education service run by Elfrida Rathbone, a Camden and Islington-based voluntary sector organisation;
- **Westminster Kingsway College:** a Further Education college whose main site is in the south of the borough near Kings Cross station;
- **City and Islington College:** a Further Education college based outside of Camden in neighbouring Islington, attended by Camden residents.

Other employment preparation and support agencies in the borough include *Job Train* and *Disability in Camden* (DISC). Both run advice and training courses for disabled people including some with learning difficulties. Including these agencies would have diluted the research sample, moving it away from a focus on learning difficulty.

There were a total of 27 student participants, as detailed below, with ages ranging from 19 to 54:

- 4 students from *Access to Employment*;
- 9 from the Leighton Project;
- 9 from Kingsway College;
- 5 from City and Islington.

Selection criteria were slightly different for the *Access 2 Employment* group which, due to the nature of that service, did not meet as a class group. Criteria I agreed with the service supervisor of *Access 2 Employment* were:

- An equal gender mix;
- A cultural mix;
- Aged between 19 and 25 (the age at which young people with learning difficulties can access youth provision in the borough and so one, official measure of a 'young person');
- Not in other FE provision;
- Able to consent to research without support.

Criteria agreed with post-16 education providers were less prescriptive. Research participants from each of these were selected by class tutors, each of whom asked whole classes if they wanted to be involved. The key criterion agreed with class tutors was a student's ability to consent to research without support. All class members from each setting expressed a wish to participate except for one student at the Leighton Project. This approach produced a spread of ages wider than 19 to 25 and a randomly arrived at gender and cultural mix.

The names of all the student participants were changed for reasons discussed below. Interviews were held in a variety of spaces. The influence of space on interview data is discussed below and in Chapters 6 and 7. The employment experiences, ethnic background and other personal information of this group are summarised in Appendix 4 and discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Student participants

Interview number	Name	Age	Interview number	Name	Age
1	Adam	22	14	Kieran	22
2	Ben	23	15	Lewis	29
3	Cath	37	16	Larry	19
4	David	29	17	Megan	27
5	Davita	22	18	Mike	20
6	Ethan	27	19	Melany	40
7	Elsie	54	20	Nalina	24
8	Haresh	21	21	Nigel	23
9	Harshal	32	22	Namita	25
10	Julie	19	23	Paul	34
11	Jane	49	24	Salvador	19
12	Jamal	26	25	Stuart	26
13	James	27	26	Susan	19
			27	Shirley	25

Day Centre members with learning difficulties

Ten Day Centre members with learning difficulties were interviewed, having been found through three agencies:

- The Camden Society;
- Shootup Hill Day Centre;
- Camden Adult Learning Disability Services.

Participants resulted from a combination of personal contacts and advice and guidance from key informers and 'gatekeepers'.

The total number of 8 participants represents an even number of men and women who had spent their working lives in community settings. Additional to this are two participants, Maud and Celia, who spent long periods of their lives in a

long-stay institution, St Lawrence's Hospital in Surrey. They were included to provide accounts of the types of work experienced inside institutions and to explore how having lived in a long-stay institution might affect employment prospects once an individual had left.

The group was selected on the basis of the following:

- To ensure an equal gender mix;
- To ensure at least one participant who began looking for employment in each decade between 1950 and 1990;
- The ability to consent to research without support.

Employment histories of this group are summarised in Appendix 5 and discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Day Centre member participants

Interview number	Name	Age	Interview number	Name	Age
28	Anna	57	33	Richard	47
29	Amy	55	34	Reg	76
30	Faith	52	35	Seth	38
31	Len	61	56	Maud	65
32	Margaret	51	57	Celia	66

Service providers

Participants were drawn from two categories: those providing education and employment support provision; and those providing or who had provided social care support. Service providers were interviewed in order to develop an analysis of the service context experienced by interview participants with learning difficulties .

Education participants were found as a result of a combination of personal contacts and others to whom I was referred by key informants and other 'gatekeepers'. The 'education' group consisted of two individuals from Kingsway College, an individual and a group interview held at City and Islington College, one individual from the Leighton Project and one individual and a Connexions group interview working directly for Camden Council. Individuals chosen represent both a horizontal and vertical employment status spread, including heads of departments and tutors working across curricula. There is also a spread of education industry experience with some, for example Cheril, relatively new to the FE environment and others, for example George, who had worked in special education for many years.

Service provider participants (education)

Interview number	Name	Service	Interview number	Name	Service
36	Andrea	Kingsway College	40	Claris	Leyton Project Camden Children Schools and Families
37	Anise	Kingsway College City and Islington	41	George	
38	Cheril	College City and Islington	42	Connexions	
39	FE College Gp	College			

The 'social care' service provider group largely resulted from a process of 'snowballing', initially via a key informant and subsequently from a number of the interviews. This group provided data with which to explore the changing relationship between statutory and voluntary and private sector service provision in Camden over time since the 1980s.

At the time of research all interviewees had worked or were working with people with learning difficulties in the voluntary or statutory sector in Camden. The group provided an opportunity to compare employment support provision over time – between the late 1970s and 2009 – as a result of including interviews with Viv, who was responsible for such work for the Camden Society in the 1970s and 1980s, and Helen, who occupied that role in 2009.

Not all of the group were directly involved in employment support provision. For example, Deni was a key individual in the Camden Society's role in supporting individuals to return to Camden from St Lawrence's Hospital in the 1980s and 1990s but had little to do with employment directly. Her testimony contextualises the growing importance of the voluntary sector in delivering services. A parents' group was also interviewed. This group had been active during the 1980s and 1990s, providing specialised housing provision for people with learning difficulties. The thesis draws upon their testimony in Chapter 5.

Service provider participants (social care)

Interview			Interview		
number	Name	Service	number	Name	Service
		Camden			Ex Camden
43	Helen	Society	53	Yvonne	Society
		Ex			
		Camden			Camden
44	Neil	LA	54	Dianne	Society
		Ex			
		Camden			Camden
46	Viv	Society	55	Janet	Society
		Ex			
		Camden			Camden
47	Chris	Society	58	Kevin	Society
		Ex			
		Camden			Camden
48	Deni	Council	59	Debbie	Society
		Ex			
		Camden			Camden
49	Richard B	Society	60	John C	Society
		Ex			
		Camden			Camden
50	Martin	Society	61	Robert S	Society
		Ex			
		Camden			
51	Jean	Society	62	John H	Advocate
	Parents				
52	Group				

Anonymity and pseudonyms

Anonymity has become one of the guiding principles of qualitative research (Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011: 198). It refers to removing or obscuring the names of participants or research sites and not including information that might lead participants or research sites to be identified (Walford, 2005). A number of research codes state that anonymity is a desirable standard in qualitative research, primarily as a means to ensure confidentiality and to minimize the risk of harm to participants (see the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics, 1999; the British Sociological Association, 2002; Social Research Association, 2003 all cited in Tilley and Woodthorpe, 2011: 199).

Set against this, in learning difficulties studies it has been argued that the hidden nature of the history of people with learning difficulties is an incentive for research participants to take ownership of the research process and their histories by having their names included (Rolph, 1998; Atkinson, 1997, Mitchell et al, 2006). As a result, this research faced the dilemma of whether or not to anonymise research participants with learning difficulties to protect them from the possible harm of disclosing an often painful past, against the sense of ownership including their names would add. Added to this is the consideration that a high proportion of participants with learning difficulties were also vulnerable 'young people' under the age of 25. Retrospectively, after considering the data it was decided to anonymise all of their names in order to offer a measure of protection from harm.

A further dilemma was faced when approaching the question of anonymising participants without learning difficulties – the 'education' and 'social care' service providers interviewed. The testimony of, in particular, 'education' providers was

potentially harmful to participants, in that they provided very personal opinions of their working environments, colleagues and of their own abilities. 'Social care' provider participants predominantly provided historical detail on the development of services over time. To have anonymised this group would have been to have displaced them – and to a degree the information they provided – from its historical context. As Tilley and Woodthorpe argue, historical processes 'cannot be fully understood in the abstract and need to be contextualised' (2011: 203). As a result, again retrospectively, it was decided to anonymise the 'education' group of participants providing personalised accounts, and not to anonymise 'social care' participants, all of whom were happy for their names to be included.

The dilemmas described both illustrate an on-going debate in social research in the twenty-first century and had implications for me as a researcher. The question of anonymity put me in the uncomfortable situation of having to make retrospective decisions on behalf of others, to take more ownership of a research project which aimed to be as inclusive as possible.

Interview strategies

Interview data was collected through one to one and group interviews. This subsection begins by describing how one to one and group interviews were approached. It goes on to discuss interview strategies for each participant group.

Both one to one and group interviews used 'intensive interview' (Charmaz, 2007: 26) methods, allowing a range of interview approaches including loosely guided explorations of topics and semi-structured, focused questions. One to one interviews explored participants' individual accounts, allowing a range of themes and issues to arise naturally out of interview directions resulting from the

interviewer-interviewee relationship (Seidman, 1997: 36). All interviews were recorded, and transcribed. Where possible testimony was informed and supported by archival research. The collection and analysis of archival data and how it informed interview data is described below.

Group interviews were also carried out. These have been defined as a 'research strategy for understanding audience/consumer attitudes and behaviour' (Wimmer and Domnick, 1997: 97; see also Frey and Fontana, 1991). This literature argues that members of a group interview should ideally know each other and this was the case in this research. Conversation in group interviews can be either structured or unstructured. The approach taken in this research project was to begin discussion around two or three structured questions and allow it to develop in a 'guided conversation approach' (Lofland and Lofland, 1984). I sought to guide conversation with questions aimed at exploring areas of relevance to the research topic. It was important to be aware of the potential problems of this approach. For example, Wimmer and Dominick point to the dangers of one or two individuals dominating discussion and skewing research relevance (1997: 97). In practice this did not occur.

The first interview group discussed are the student participants drawn from across four education and employment support services. For student participants a core list of questions was used, with conversations being structured around the list across each of the four student groups interviewed. An initial small group pilot with five students from Kingsway College in 2008 helped in developing interview questions. The questions were:

- What do you understand by the word 'work'?

- Do your Mother and Father go to work? What kind of work do they do?
- Can you describe what you liked and disliked about school?
- Can you describe what you like and dislike about college? How long have you been here?
- Has the college sent you on work experience? Tell me a bit about it.
- Can you tell me about any other work you have done?
- What kind of work would you like if you had a full time job?
- Tell me a bit about what you do in your leisure time.
- Why do you think other people go to work?
- What would your dream job be?

There were two reasons for using this semi-structured approach with student participants. Firstly, a major concern when preparing to interview young people with learning difficulties was to address issues of 'theoreticity' as discussed above (Silverman, 1983). A research aim was to develop a framework of questions, which provided an opportunity to develop a narrative shaped in practice by interview participants themselves whilst exploring issues of general relevance to the research project. In short, there needed to be a framework of questions which showed participants they were being taken seriously in a context of at least 'negotiated' control of the interview process (Charmaz, 2007: 27). Ensuring 'theoreticity' is more complex than simply having a good set of questions but also depends on the kinds of relationships, the 'rapport', developed during the course of interview (Rapley, 2004). The core list of questions was one way of re-assuring each individual that they were being taken as seriously as everyone else, both simply to support individual's self-esteem and to safeguard possibilities for future interviewing.

Secondly, the student group was the largest single research element (27 participants) located in four agency contexts. It was therefore important to design a questions framework which consistently explored core areas of concern in each context.

To prepare for one-to-one student interviews an initial group presentation was given in each research context, except for the group interviewed through *Access 2 Employment* where this was not possible. During this presentation an explanation was given of what 'research' means, how participants would be involved, how research results would be used and what it meant to consent to being involved. This presentation included a mock interview with a volunteer in front of the whole group and some humorous role play. There were also given an information sheet on the project along with their consent form (see appendices 2 and 3). The aim of this was to address concerns students might have about subsequent one-to-one interviews in a familiar and supportive group setting. This gave them the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any doubts they might have about the research process supported by peers and staff where necessary. Questions asked by students included whether their interview was part of college course work and what would happen to their interviews once recorded. This gave me opportunities to reassure them that their interviews had nothing to do with college work and explain how I intended to use their testimony.

The second interview group was Day Centre members with learning difficulties. For this group interviews were 'loosely guided' (Charmaz, 2007: 26). Interviews with Day Centre members maintained a focus on eliciting and exploring employment histories but did not use the more formally established core set of questions, choosing instead to approach each interview individually albeit with a common set of specific areas to explore guiding questioning. These issues

included finding out how many jobs people had been in, what their first job had been and how they had got it, details of their current employment and so on. In the research I aimed to use employment histories as a way of exploring individuals' life histories, investigating areas such as housing histories and educational histories in the process.

Interviews for this group aimed to provide an interview context as open as possible to the development of subjective accounts of employment, situated within an exploration of the relationships between life histories and employment. For example, Amy (interview 29) began her interview by describing her employment before moving on to her life as a young person moving from one boarding school to another before settling in Camden. A good deal of the interview concerns a relentless process of personal change – moving house, finding and losing partners, making and losing friends – which Amy used as a context within which to understand her employment histories. Using a 'loosely guided' approach, while encouraging Amy to explore interview topics, may have supported Amy's own theorising about her life (Atkinson 2004: 698) and its relationship to employment.

The third interview group comprised service providers, a group split between education and social care service providers. A similar 'guided' approach to that above was adopted with service providers but with differing overall aims. Interviews with 'education' providers explored the relationships and opinions service providers had developed with students with learning difficulties as a social group and with individual students. Each interview began with the question: 'How did you start working with people with learning difficulties?' In this way, it was intended to support each participant in exploring an analysis of the education of people with learning difficulties starting from their own, subjectively

recalled (Fentress, 1992) viewpoint. The focus was not primarily on how FEs taught students, but how tutors felt about how students were taught.

Interviews with 'social care' providers aimed primarily to construct an oral history of the relationship between public and private service providers and agencies between the 1980s and 2010 in Camden. The over-arching aim of questioning remained focussed on developing an historical analysis of employment support. However, it was necessary to locate this within an understanding of how the voluntary sector became more important over time. Therefore, several individuals, for example Chris (Interview 47) Martin (Interview 50) and Neil (Interview 44) all had little to contribute specifically to employment support histories but did provide essential contextual information .

This group was almost entirely gathered by 'snowballing'. Typical starter questions included 'What can you remember about your role in supporting people to move out of long-stay?' (Deni, interview 48) or 'How did the Camden Society get involved in providing housing for people?' (Chris, interview 47).

This sub-section looked at the interview strategies used with each of the research groups. It discussed the value and challenges of one to one and group interviews, and described the 'guided conversation' approach (Lofland and Lofland, 1984) used in both. Key themes to emerge with regard to practice include the value of the concept of theorecticity when working with young people with learning difficulties, which requires an interview approach which assumes participants are capable of rational choice. The limits to and advantages of establishing rapport during interview was also explained.

Data analysis

Data analysis took place as my research progressed in an iterative process of moving between data and analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1999). An initial process of coding (Glaser and Strauss, 1999), based on the testimony of the first five participants, identified emergent themes and categories. As data collection progressed these codes were assessed to decide which represented the data generally (Charmaz, 2007: 91). An example of early coding is included below, drawn from first round interviews, and expressed largely in the participant's own words:

Work means...

Going out, out of

Tasks

Something to get excited about

Hard, a little bit hard

Multi tasked

Done in a kitchen

Serving people

A place where customers can be harsh

Where you can get rushed by others

College as non work – static

Not being planned for

Ideal work as solution to personal problems

Work as making things good, being a role model, celebrity

(David, interview 4)

From these and other codes 'situational maps' were developed (Clarke, 2003) in order to develop a graphical representation of coding in a two stage process of 'messy' and 'ordered' mapping (See Appendices 7 and 8).

From an analysis of these themes and categories a small number of participants were chosen for second and, in a few cases, third interviews. These interviews explored key themes arising from the first round of interviews, in order to elaborate and refine the categories frameworking theory (Charmaz, 2007: 96) in a process of theoretical sampling. For example, as David's testimony above highlights a number of participants expressed an awareness of a notion of career. Five students, three from Kingsway College and two from City and Islington, were interviewed a second time in order to gather data on this.

Archival research

Archival research was carried out both to analyse 'dominant voices' (Bogard 2001: 431) in the history of the borough and to provide documentary context for oral data. Analysis developed critically, with the perspective that texts do not stand as objective facts (Prior, 2003) but are constructs, developed for specific purposes in specific social, historical and political contexts (Charmaz, 2007: 35).

Three archives were selected, for reasons explained below. These were:

- London Metropolitan Archives (LMA);
- London Borough of Camden Local History Archives (LBCLHA);
- Camden Society's archives.

Policy documents available on-line and from Her Majesty's Stationery Office were also analysed and are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Historical archives fell into three categories:

- LMA: World War Two and post-war texts describing St Lawrence's hospital and the post-war development of community employment support provision across London;
- LBCLHA: Camden Borough Local Authority documents, including minutes of meetings, local policy and other relevant employment support centred literature dating from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s;
- Camden Society archives: Memos, minutes of meetings and policy documents pertaining to the Camden Society from 1974 to 2009.

Each archive provided valuable information and had limitations. For example, archives at LBCLHA included the minutes of meetings of the Mental Handicap Services Liaison Group, which began to meet in 1988. There are a number of individuals mentioned in the minutes of direct relevance to the study of employment support in the borough during this crucial historical period. For

example, George Odwell set up the 'Friends of Greenwood', which lobbied the Local Authority for funds for the Adult Training Centre based in Greenwood Place. Odwell is only listed as present at Group meetings – there is no record of his views – and no other record of the 'Friends of Greenwood' is recorded.

Very little is written about the history of early employment support through Adult Training Centres (ATC) and nothing about provision in Camden. An important source providing information regarding the development of community services, including some records of buildings adapted to suit ATC purposes, was *A Short History of London County Council* (Jackson, 1965) held at the LMA, which provided a framework of dates of development of services in London. This framework guided subsequent research in other archives, in particular the LBCLHA. Archival research at the LBCLHA revealed the whereabouts of Camden's original ATC in Holmes Road. Photographs of this and of Greenwood Place are included in Chapter 5. Archival research revealed not only the circumstances of the centre's opening but what the building had originally been, how it had been adapted and who ran the service (LBCLHA, Piano Factory, 19/12/1978). This was not true for the Greenwood Place site and, as discussed in following chapters, a number of former users of the service were able to provide descriptions of the facility, acting as 'bridges' (Walmsley, 1994: 104) between the archives and oral testimony.

Using a combination of texts and oral testimony provided both a narrative and a context for establishing the historical development of employment opportunities and support. A number of 'texts that tell the story of other texts' (Charmaz, 2007: 39) were used. These included newspaper clippings outlining community fund-raising activities for Greenwood Place (Hampstead and Highgate Express, 11/5/1981 'Darts night for Mentally Handicapped') and National Association of

Local Government Officers strike leaflets (NALGO, 1991, strike bulletin), both of which fleshed out the points of conflict concerning resource allocation in the borough during the late 1980s and early 1990s that minutes of the local government committee meetings of the period do not discuss adequately. Given this combination of textual analysis local government archives, such as policy documents and minutes of meetings, might be regarded as 'dominant and elite voices in the public conversation about a social problem' (Bogard, 2001: 431), one element providing essential context, in the development of an historical narrative drawing on a range of texts as well as oral testimony.

Ethical issues

Ethical considerations inform all research projects. It is argued that these have become more important during the twenty-first century 'partly as a consequence of legislative change in human rights and data protection, but also a result of increased public concern about the limits of inquiry' (Social Research Association, 2003: 7). Obtaining consent to participate in research presents particular ethical challenges to researchers in the field of learning difficulties. A 'significant tension' (Cameron and Murphy, 2006: 113) exists between ensuring that people with learning difficulties understand the nature and implications of their involvement in research while at the same time avoiding coercion. Iacono and Murray state (2003: 49) that there is a 'need to protect potential vulnerable participant groups, while ensuring that demands placed on researchers are not so restrictive as to preclude valuable research'. The British Sociological Association (2002) states that researchers should 'anticipate and guard against consequences for research participants which can be predicted to be harmful' (www.britisoc.org, accessed 11/10/08). The ethical framework of the research

was designed with this in mind and in accordance with the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and the Act's Draft Code of Practice (DH, 2006). This established a list of 'intrusive research' topic areas, a number of which are relevant to this research project. *Conducting Research with People not having the Capacity to Consent to their Participation* (British Psychological Society, 2008) provides advice and models for recruiting and assessing the capacity of potential research participants to consent and take part in research projects such as this one under its 'Five Statutory Principles' guidance (British Psychological Society, 2008: 13-20). These guidelines supported the submission of research ethics to the Open University's Human Participants and Materials Research Ethics Committee (OUHPMREC). My ethics submission was passed by this committee in 2008 before research began. A number of OUHPMREC publications also supported this proposal, including *Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants* (2007).

There is a responsibility on the researcher to explain as fully as possible what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, what the likely effects of participating will be and the use to which the data will be put. In order to ensure this a range of accessible written information was developed, including an overview of the research aims and methods and an accessible consent form (see appendices 3 and 4). Information materials and consent forms also drew on materials developed by the Joseph Rowntree Trust (Ward, 1997) for research carried out with young people. The literature suggests a photograph of the interviewer is useful (Social Research Association and Wellcome Trust Consent and Confidentiality conference document, 29 January, 2008) and information materials developed included this. (See Appendices 2 and 3.)

Information materials were handed out to participants with learning difficulties at the beginning of the interview relationship. For student participants, materials were given at the group presentation stage with a verbal introduction and then discussed. Consent forms were distributed and explained on an individual basis at the beginning of each one-to-one interview. All of these materials are included in appendices 2 and 3. With the *Access 2 Employment* group there was no opportunity to hold a group meeting. Because of this, both information materials and consent forms were discussed at the beginning of each individual interview.

For Day Centre member participants', information and consent forms were discussed at the beginning of each interview. The consent form advised participants that they could withdraw from the project at any time and this was reiterated verbally at the beginning of every interview, both at first and second round interview stages.

With participants without learning difficulties, explanations of the research process were made verbally while the same consent form procedure was followed for all. Efforts were made to ensure participants were aware of the research process and what they were involved in. It has been argued that it cannot be assumed that any interview participant – with learning difficulties or without – fully understands 'the esoteric activity' that is research (Walmsley, 1995; see also Rolph, 1998).

Miller and Boulton (2007: 2209) argue; 'We now carry out research in social contexts in which experiences of agency, power and risk all shape the qualitative research encounter' and the question of the power relationships between research and participant is of particular relevance in disability studies (see for example, Barnes, 2005). Rolph argues the 'issue is to find a way to break this circle of disempowerment' (1998: 68). One method of attempting this is to provide

an interview context which offers at least elements of the control of research directions to interview participants and how this researched sought to do this has been described above. Also, it is a mistake to underestimate the various and subtle ways in which research participants seek to influence and shape research encounters (Walmsley, 1995; Atkinson, 1997; Rolph, 1998). During the course of this research project there were countless examples of participants changing discussion topics, interviewing the interviewer or simply signalling in a range of ways – from very brief or no responses, to directly stating ‘I’ve got to go now’ (Kevin, interview 58) – that they did not wish to continue. It is important to remember that power is always relational and based in interaction (Giddens, 1990: 88, 93, 100) relationships based on its exercise always open to subtle manipulation and interpretation.

Interviews have the capacity to explore a range of personal and potentially emotional topics so it was important to establish appropriate support. For participants with learning difficulties each agency through which they were located agreed to provide counselling and support if necessary. In the event, though a number of interviews did involve explorations of topics which deeply affected participants, support was not requested.

Managing challenges in the field

This final sub-section examines two key challenges of data gathering. These are: how interview space informed the interview process; and how reflective practice informed and supported changing research identities.

Interview space

A challenge that arose during the process of interviewing student participants was to explore and understand how interview space informed interview relationships and subsequently the quantity and quality of interview data. The relationship between space and interview is discussed in the literature. Brown and Durrhiem (2009) point to knowledge which is 'spatially determined' suggesting that the spaces in which students were interviewed may influence the knowledge available for them to draw on. Charmaz (2007) discusses the importance of negotiating research contexts during research, how whether interview space was mutually agreed upon with students may have influenced their communicability. The learning difficulty literature explores questions of ownership and power, and how expressing choice over where interviews take place may empower participants and support richer data gathering (Walmsley, 1994; Atkinson, 1989). Finally, Giddens refers to the dialectical relationship between space and interview, how the spatial context of interview is 'shaped and organised as an integral part of that interaction as a communicative encounter' (1990: 83).

As described above there were four student groups; two groups interviewed in spaces in Further Education Colleges, one group interviewed in the offices of *Access 2 Employment*, based at the Camden Society's head office, while the Leighton Project group was interviewed in office space at the Eflrida Rathbone Centre, Camden where the Leighton Project was based. Interviewing students at their places of education and employment training helped maintain an interview focus on exploring the links between the employment preparation they were experiencing and what they knew and thought about employment. It would have been very difficult to have arranged interviews for every student in their own

homes due to the large number of student participants, the fact that they were drawn from all parts of London and the added complexity of arranging interview space with parents or other co-habitees. Insisting on this may have excluded some students from the research process.

During the research I maintained a field notebook and consistently commented on a number of issues including how relaxed students seemed during interview, and how flowing conversations had been. Beyond doubt the most relaxed and flowing interviews took place in canteen spaces of both FE colleges (Field notebook entries, 6/9/09; 24/9/09; 13/10/09). Recorded as least communicative were office space interviews with both *Access 2 Employment* and Leighton Project groups (Field notebook entry, 18/3/09; 25/3/09). These reflections were supported by an analysis of data subsequently leading to a tentative conclusion that the degree of inclusion afforded students in FE space is more supportive of communicability than the office space of voluntary sector organisations.

This research also suggests that the shared space of FE canteens supported more flowing conversation than either FE library or classroom space, where the other FE-based interviews took place. Canteen interviews were second round interviews. All participants interviewed in canteens had first been interviewed in either a classroom or a library. All canteen interviews provided richer data than during first interviews of those same participants. For example, one student, David (interview 4) moved from a very guarded first interview to a frank, reflective and conversationally skilled second interview in canteen space.

The reasons for this may be to do with the fact that during second round interview participants felt generally more relaxed with the process, and had already met and worked with me. It may also be that interviews held in familiar canteen spaces, which are primarily recreational spaces shared with and largely

owned by participants in common with other students, informed and supported the 'communicative encounter' (Giddens, 1990: 83) of interview. This consideration has implications for future research with student – and potentially non-student – research participants.

Changing research identities

A second challenge faced during my research was in managing my own changing identity, from former service provider to researcher. As explained in Chapter 1, before this research project for seven years I was a youth worker, working with young people with learning difficulties. During this time I had developed a range of professional behaviours and practices thought appropriate to that employment role. It became apparent that as a researcher, what Ann Day calls these 'assumptions and presuppositions' (2008:45) were no longer useful. There were a number of ways in which this became apparent. Here relationships with former colleagues and with student research participants are discussed to illustrate the reflective process (Bourdieu, 1990) through which I began to reassess my professional identity.

One way in which I came to recognise my changing identity was through reflective analysis of a number of interviews with former work colleagues. Throughout, former colleagues were helpful in all aspects of research, their interviews invariably provided rich data and I was at all times made to feel welcome and supported. However, re-examining field notes and transcripts revealed an underlying, subtly expressed awareness – if not suspicion – of my changed identity as a researcher and the potential discontinuity with my former colleagues that caused. For example, one participant talked at length about other individuals she had known who had moved from service delivery to research and

'abandoned' (Field notes, 9/11/08) former friends in the service. Variants of this suspicion are apparent in the transcripts. The space growing between me and former colleagues signalled by this marked my journey from service provider to researcher and required conscious strategies to maintain interview relationships.

Reflecting on interviews with student participants I became aware of elements of behaviours developed as a service provider. One example is provided by a post-interview exchange with Jamal (interview 12) as he asks for advice regarding employment support. When re-examined it is apparent that my responses are structured around what Rapley calls 'professionally established' attitudes (2004: 25) which contribute to constructing Jamal as an individual with learning difficulties dependent upon guidance from a service provider. A reflexive reappraisal of Jamal's input into the conversation shows how subtly and decisively he attempted to steer the encounter to suit his needs. Standing in his way were the 'professionally established' presuppositions which sought to maintain him as a person in need of my support, former practice which, unchallenged, may have been counter-productive in terms of enjoying the full richness of what Jamal as a research participant had to offer.

Conclusion

The second part of this chapter discussed research strategies used during this project. It explained the methods used to find research participants and discussed the nature of the research groups that emerged from this. It discussed the detail of strategies used in interview. It looked at how data was analysed and

at the three archives which supported research and at the nature of each archive. The section discussed the ethical concerns of research in general and at those specific to learning difficulties studies. It concluded by discussing two key challenges encountered during the process of data gathering.

Key themes emerged from this analysis. I found that central to finding research participants were personal contacts, who provided advice and guidance from which other participants were found through a process of 'snowballing'. The section also pointed to the importance of key informants and 'gatekeepers' in this regard, whose input the research found to be on the whole positive. This subsection concluded that a letter of invitation to participate, though circulated in appropriate specialist literature, was ineffective in attracting participants.

A central discussion flowing from the identification of research participants was with regard to anonymity in research and its relevance to this project. As discussed there, a relatively complex strategy of anonymity was required, reflecting both the complexities of the participant groups and the nature of an ongoing debate in social research with regard to the topic.

The relationship between and the value to research of exploring archival sources in conjunction with oral testimony was discussed. I concluded that using a combination of texts and oral testimony helped me to construct a narrative and context in which the development of employment opportunities and support could be studied. Key ethical considerations were discussed, exploring the nature of power in the research process and drew attention to the relational, two-way nature of power relationships (Giddens, 1990) in interview situations; how participants influence research directions. Finally, two challenges I faced in the field – the question of interview space and researcher identities were discussed. I concluded that negotiated interview space had supported richer data during this

research project and that reflective research practice had enabled a critique of former professional practices obstructing research.

The research strategies described here flowed from the methodological choices described in part one of this chapter. The strategies supported an exploration of the 'mutually dependent' (Giddens, 1990: 54) relationship between agency and structure. They enabled me to explore the recollections of participants within a research framework which addressed the potential for accounts built on 'uchronic memory' (Portelli, 1988: 46), building in archival and policy research in order to contextualise the interview accounts. Interviews were structured around the research focus of employment, building a framework within which the open nature of oral history interviews was contained. This combination of oral history interviews focussed on employment and, in particular with student participants, guided by a specific list of questions, represent the methodological compromise I made between maintaining control of the research process and attempting to develop an as inclusive a project as possible. Participants were invited to take control of interview encounters from within a research framework that attempted to maintain a specific research focus.

Having discussed key methodological considerations for this research project, Chapter 4 goes on to analyse the policy context of employment for people with learning difficulties.

Chapter 4: The Policy Context for Research

Introduction

This chapter sets out the policy context of the research. The policy discussed here has influenced the lives of research participants during the research period from 1944 to 2010. Historically and in 2010 the policy set a framework within which participants with learning difficulties were or had been employed, or were seeking to find employment. The policy discussed here also frames how research participants without learning difficulties sought to develop and provide services and support for people with learning difficulties finding work.

Legislation has rarely been developed specifically for people with learning difficulties, most policy affecting this group being included in other, more broad based legislation such as the 1959 and 1981 Mental Health Acts. Those 'totally specific' (Race, 2007: 84) to people with learning difficulties can be summarised as follows: *Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped* (1971); *Valuing People: A new strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st century* (2001); *Valuing People Now: a new three strategy for people with learning disabilities* (2009); and *Valuing Employment Now: real jobs for people with learning disabilities* (2009). Of these documents, all of which were White Papers, only one – *Valuing Employment Now* (2009) – deals solely with employment. With this in mind, this chapter explores the broad policy context within which employment policy and opportunities for people with learning difficulties developed between 1944 and

2010, taking in some policy development at a local level in the London Borough of Camden.

The chapter serves to contextualise the findings presented later in the thesis. It demonstrates how some of the theoretical ideas discussed in Chapter 2 came to feature in a range of practical policy initiatives. The policy detail discussed in this chapter sets out the ideas, beliefs and rhetoric expressed at a policy level and has been drawn from an analysis of both primary documentation gathered through archival research, and secondary sources. The chapter is divided into five sections.

I discussed education policy for people learning difficulties in Chapter 2 and will return to education legislation in Chapter 6 when I consider preparation for employment. Here, I focus on the changing nature of policy directly relating to accommodating adults with learning difficulties in the labour market.

Section one of this chapter provides an overview of how social policy has been theorised with regard to the employment of disabled people since the inception of the welfare state post World War Two. It compares policy priorities immediately post war, and how they have been conceptualised, with those between 1990 and 2010.

Section two of this chapter analyses the period between 1944 and 1970. At the centre of this period is the 1959 Mental Health Act. I argue that this legislation provides an illustration of a stalled historical process, partially underway with regard to the expansion of occupation centres following the end of World War Two, being re-directed by changing social awareness and priorities. I also argue that the 1959 Act signposts a key concern underpinning the development of community-based employment for people with learning difficulties from the end of

the second world war to the 1990s, that of developing employment-based services in local communities as an alternative to housing people in NHS-run long-stay institutions.

Section three looks at the White Paper *Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped* (1971). The section analyses a fundamental contradiction of this 'influential paper' (Walmsley, 1995: 326) in that, as Race argues, at an ideological level it draws on the integrationist ideas of normalisation, evolving following publication of *Changing Patterns in Residential Services for the Mentally Retarded* (1969), while at a practice level it sought to expand the 'segregated provision' (Carter, 1981: 168) of Adult Training Centres (ATC) (Race 2007).

Section four examines attempts to address some of the contradictions of ATCs discussed in Section two and to develop Social Education Centres, with more broadly integrationist and educationist aims. It explores some of the reasons for the failure to achieve this in meaningful ways. The section concludes with a discussion of community care policy which, for Barnes and Walker (1996) signalled a shifting;

[A]way from care in the community supported by Local Authority personnel, towards a reduction of the role of local authorities within the formal sector and the encouragement of a confusing mixture of care by the community itself and other non-statutory care (1996: 211).

Section five interrogates the period from 1991 to 2010. It analyses the impact of the 'Real Jobs' initiative of 1990-91 and how it served to set a context for the

supported employment policy and practice which followed. The section examines the policy context of changing employment support roles for Local Authorities and voluntary sector agencies and considers the 'prime contracting' model by which central government currently finances employment support. It offers a detailed analysis of *Valuing People Now* and *Valuing Employment Now*.

1. An overview of policy debates relating to employment of disabled people

Post-war social policy analysis was dominated by what Deacon and Mann term a 'dominant Fabian tradition' (Deacon and Mann, 1999: 415) with its emphasis on a 'gas and water' welfare approach (Fremantle, 1960: 263) arguing for a pragmatic, government-led approach to poverty alleviation. This analysis has been critiqued for its 'uncritical empiricism' (Gooby, 1981: 7) which broadly accepts that the extent to which social problems can be addressed is limited by the economic priorities of capital (Gooby, 1981:7). The critical social policy approach (see especially Gooby and Dale, 1981) understands social policy in general and welfare policy in particular as resulting from the conflict between labour and capital. According to this approach welfare policy results from: 'The struggle of the working class against their exploitation; the requirements of industrial capitalism...for a more efficient environment in which to operate; recognition by the property owners of the price that has to be paid for political security' (Butterworth and Holman, 1975: 57-8).

The above authors argue this produces welfare policy with a dual nature, both potentially addressing social inequality and acting as a means of social control

according to the 'requirements of the capitalist economy' (Gooby and Dale, 1981: 156). Historically shifting patterns of welfare provision can be understood in these terms (Hay, 1979: 6) with a capitalist class broadly supporting the need for welfare investment when it suits their interests and opposing them when it did not:

From the late nineteenth century to around 1920, as foreign competition and labour unrest intensified, many influential employers began to argue for state welfare as a means of social control and as a contribution to economic efficiency...When mass unemployment took the edge off labour militancy and guaranteed a supply of labour, employers became more sensitive to the costs of welfare (Hay, 1979:6).

Goody and Dale identify three ways in which class interests are expressed in welfare policy. First, working class pressure leads to concessions from the government especially in liberal democracies; secondly the government formulates and prosecutes the long-term interests of capital, either by initiating policies, or adapting the concessions it has granted under the pressure of class struggle to the needs of capital; thirdly the working class and the capitalist class may both see certain reforms as in their interests. For example, the introduction of many of the social services developed after World War Two were supported both by capital and labour, though for different reasons (Bolderson, 1980; Gough, 1979).

The historical context of policy development in the years between 1990 and 2010 is very different to that described above. During the later period governments

have adopted similar 'neo-liberal' (Jessop, 1994) agendas in economic and social policy, including in the health and social care sector, pursuing goals of 'economic liberalisation and free market competition; deregulation...privatisation of public provision; the introduction of market forces into what is left of public provision' (Jessop, 2003 cited in Burton and Kagan, 2006: 302). This policy direction, termed 'new public management' (NPM) (Cumella, 2008) has developed in response to the particular conditions of the 'form of capital accumulation' (Grover and Stuart, 2007) during the period, whose 'attendant regulatory dilemmas...explain why there is a remarkable similarity between the approaches of the current New Labour administration and the previous neo-liberal [Conservative] government' (Grover and Stuart, 2011). More simply, the economic and financial challenges which world capital faced during this period have, Grover and Stuart argue, determined the type and form of social policy pursued.

Though adopted throughout Europe, it has been argued that NPM themes have been developed further in the UK since 'the UK represents an extreme case within Western Europe' due to its 'long established welfare state' (Barnes and Walker 1996). As the authors show, central to the introduction of NPM in the health and social care sector were ideas of consumerism and service individualisation through a health care 'market' in which care 'consumers' have individual choice between competing providers, able to choose one which suits their needs best (Barnes and Walker, 1996: 378). Grover and Stuart argue that from 1997 New Labour and other left-of-centre Western administrations continued and developed NPM strategies. Under Blair in the UK and the Democrat President Bill Clinton in the US strategies were pursued under cover of the politics of the Third Way (Callinicos, 2001:2). Their most prominent intellectual exponent at the time, Anthony Giddens, described Third Way politics

as separate from on the one hand 'Old style social democracy', which had excessive faith in the state, and neo-liberalism, which has misplaced trust in market forces (Giddens, 2000:32-3). The Third Way thus lies beyond Old Left and New Right, seeking to establish a bridge between the two. For Cumella, *Valuing People* initiatives are an example of Third Way NPM par excellence. Describing *Valuing People* as 'an uneasy amalgam of the progressive and the neoliberal' Burton and Kagan also pick up on this Third Way-ist attempt to bridge economic and political gaps through social policy. This chapter ends with an analysis of *Valuing People* documents, contributing this to the social policy literature.

2. 1944 to 1970: From occupation centres to Adult Training Centres

This section primarily investigates two landmark pieces of legislation, the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (1944) and the Mental Health Act (1959). It analyses the economic, political and ideological contexts of this legislation, supported by a broader interrogation of other key national and local policy developments during the period.

The Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (1944) (DPA) set a policy context for how employment-focused service provision for disabled people developed in the immediate post-war years. It has been argued that a political compromise between employers, organised labour and government set a framework for the passage of this Act (Bolderson, 1980: 175-79; Englander, 1994; Borsay, 2005: 133-136) with both organised labour and capital sharing an interest in the

eventual terms of employment support encoded by the Act. The DPA has its roots in the so-called 'Famine of Men' of World War Two (Bolderson, 1980: 170) and an 'interim scheme' – providing work training and employment for all disabled people over 16 during war-time labour shortage conditions – which formed the basis for the post-war scheme. There were three elements to it: training and resettlement workshops to rehabilitate and re-train disabled workers considered capable of taking up mainstream employment; a quota scheme under which employers with over 20 employees had to recruit three percent from the registered disabled; and sheltered employment, most often run by Local Authorities for those who were considered not likely to find mainstream employment (Borsay, 2005: 135). The schemes were overseen by Disablement Resettlement Officers employed by the Ministry of Labour, themselves often disabled ex-soldiers from World War One (Taylor, 1948).

Employers feared having to take on three percent of their workers from the disability register who may not be as productive as non-disabled workers (Bolderson, 1980: 179; Borsay, 2005: 134). Unions opposed the idea of disabled workers, potentially incapable of full work duties, being placed in light jobs at lower wages in mainstream employment. After the experiences of World War One – when average wage rates in many industries fell during and after war due to previously unemployed workers being sucked into war-time and other industries (Holton, 1975) – unions were aware of the danger of lower-paid disabled workers competing with higher cost non-disabled workers and potentially exerting downward pressure on average wage rates (Bolderson, 1980: 177). Bolderson argues that the DPA was the compromise solution addressing the fears of employers and organised labour.

At a local level, under its provisions a sheltered workshop opened in Holmes Road, Camden in June of 1958. It provided carpentry and joinery training for 50 men from across north London. Its aim was to 'enable disabled people, who have been unable to satisfy the Ministry that they are capable of a full week's work to be given the chance to prove themselves' (LBCLHA: Welfare Committee, 21/1/1965). The workshop was contracted to work for the London County Council's supplies department (LBCLHA: Welfare Committee, 21,1,1965) repairing and making furniture. Adults and 'juveniles' were employed on a system of differentiated weekly pay rates for 16-20 year olds, those over 20 and another rate 'in cases of exceptional skill' (LBC Welfare Committee, 16/6/1966). All rates were agreed between Remploy, the government's disability employment service, and trade unions. Wage rates did not keep pace with the rise in wages post war of 3 percent per year (Armstrong et al, 1991: 122).

It is unclear to what extent people with learning difficulties benefited directly from DPA provision. For example, Holmes Road records do not specify whether any trainees had learning difficulties. Nationally, a voluntary register at the heart of the scheme may have discriminated against those with reading and writing difficulties. Though people with learning difficulties may not have directly benefited from DPA provision, the guiding principle of the policy – that government was responsible for the employment support of all disabled people – is likely to have influenced the growth and change in the nature of occupation centres. Occupation centres had developed as a community-based, employment focused, provision during the 1920s. In 1922 there were 20 centres, run by charities, providing day services for 'trainable defectives' (Jones, 1960: 79). The Board of Control, a government-run body created by the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act, was responsible for conditions at the centres. The London County Council (LCC) took control of occupation centres within its jurisdiction in 1931 from the

voluntary sector, London Association for Mental Welfare (LMA: Medical Officer of Health [MOH], 26/4/1957). In London, three full time and 15 part time centres were attended by approximately 300 children and adults. By 1939 the LCC had opened one more full time centre, increasing total attendance to 340. All of them closed during war. Post war numbers of occupation centres increased UK-wide from 191 in 1938 to 255 in 1954. The number of people attending rose from 4,244 to 10,942 over the same period (Tizard, 1956:10).

The first occupation centre to re-open in London after the war was in Stepney in July 1948. It catered for 20 boys and it was opened by and under the control of the LCC's Education Committee. It offered a curriculum based around practical skills like woodwork, shoe repairs and leatherwork. The LCC originally asked the Education Committee to be responsible for a network of occupation centres in London, before moving control to the LCC's Health Committee 'under section 51 of the NHS Act 1946, for carrying out its mental health duties' (LMA: MOH, 26/4/1957). Control of occupation centres passed to LCC health committees largely by default because the Education Committee was 'very preoccupied with educational needs' and 'because of the considerable administrative difficulties involved in the arrangement' (LMA: MOH, 26/4/1957).

This administrative decision was taken despite opposition from the National Union of Teachers, the British Medical Association (O'Connor and Tizard, 1956: 145-6) and the Association of Parents of Backward Children (Shennan, 1980: 5-9) all of whom called for responsibility for the running of occupation centres to be given to education authorities. By 1959, in London three occupation centres had re-opened (LMA: MOH, 26/1/1959). At that time the LCC was sending people with learning difficulties under guardianship to, among others, the Brighton Guardianship Society (MOH, 30/4/59) and to occupation centres in Kent and

Essex (LMA: Mental Health sub committee, 8/7/1958). A lack of community based provision – in London and elsewhere – was a contributory factor to the passage of the 1959 Mental Health Act. Other factors in the passage of the Act included declining standards of NHS-based long stay hospital care for people with learning difficulties, which had become increasingly expensive and inadequate since the end of war (<http://www.nhshistory.net/Chapter%201.htm>, accessed 22/03/10). As Welshman and Walmsley highlight, campaigns by the National Council for Civil Liberties during this immediate post-war period against the inhumanity of long-stay institutions was also a contributory factor in the Percy Commission being established in 1954 (2006: 22), from whose findings the 1959 Act was developed.

The Percy Commission's *Report of the Royal Commission on the Law Relating to Mental Illness and Mental Deficiency* (1959) provided the basis for the 1959 Mental Health Act. The Act defined 'mental subnormality' as a state of 'arrested or incomplete development of mind which includes subnormality of intelligence', establishing subnormality and severe subnormality as the two categories of this. By referring to 'subnormality of intelligence' the Act closed a loophole left open by previous Mental Deficiency Acts of 1913 and 1927 which meant it was legal to 'interpret mental development without any reference to intellectual development' (Mittler, 1979: 31). As such, diagnosis of learning difficulties could be made on assessments of social competences alone. Mittler points out that the 1959 Act reflects the total dominance of a 'medical approach' to learning difficulties at this time (31). For example, the Ministry of Education was not asked to give evidence to the Percy Commission. Centrally, the Act aimed to develop community-based services stating that 'mental patients' who did not need hospital inpatient treatment should be cared for in the community (Robinson, 1963). At this time, community care took a largely 'bricks and mortar' form (Welshman and

Walmsley, 2006: 39) with the government taking responsibility for directly funding and providing buildings-based care and, post-1959, employment support services.

The Act indicates an ideological and political move towards community-based care, a 'framework for change' (Walmsley, 1994: 327) and it is in this light that we should consider the development of Adult Training Centres (ATC) over the following decade. The new ATCs represented a move away from the 'occupying time' approach of many pre-war occupation centres – which were renamed 'Junior Training Centres' under provision of the 1959 Act, and specialised in services for young people with learning difficulties (Rolph, 2005: 18) – towards a training approach based in ATCs, centred on developing industrial skills for adults. As Chapter 2 argued, an ideological context in which ATCs were developed during this period was informed by the work of O'Connor and Tizard. World War Two labour shortages had shown the ability of people with learning difficulties to take on labour roles they were previously thought to be incapable of and the ATCs can in part be seen as a response to this potential. The Training Council for Teachers of the Mentally Handicapped, set up in 1964 as a result of the Scott Report of 1963, also contributed to this context. It considered the purpose of ATCs to be largely educational. The Training Council, run by the Department of Health, oversaw the development of a number of accredited teaching courses for ATC staff which provided the basis for the development of specialist teaching skills (Department of Health and Social Security, 1974). Both O'Connor and Tizard, and the Training Council made the case for ATCs functioning predominantly as learning institutions. However, as this and the following sections make clear, subsequent policy and the perceptions of those who ran the centres often emphasised the small workplace cultures of the

centres and the importance to their functioning of contract fulfilment (Carter, 1981: 164-5) one illustration of the centres' contradictory nature.

The LCC funded its first purpose-built industrial ATC in 1961 in Clapham (Jackson, 1965: 175). It catered for 90 trainees and was contracted to do repairs to and produce furniture for LCC use. By 1963 three ATCs had opened. Numbers attending ATCs grew across the country. Speaking at the MENCAP Annual Convention in 1963, Health Secretary Enoch Powell said that there were 11,259 places at ATCs and that this would need to increase to 27,800 by 1970 (Shennan, 1980: 23) illustrating the centrality of the ATC strategy to the transfer of people and resources from NHS to community-based provision as outlined in the 1959 Act. The White Paper, *Health and Welfare: The development of Community Care* (1963) set a target of 0.65 places per thousand of the population. A majority of the Local Authorities surveyed that year fulfilled or bettered this target (Mittler, 1979: 125). By 1969 the figure for trainees attending Local Authority-run ATCs was 24,600 (DoHSS, 1974.: 22), a four-fold increase in ten years.

A shift in the perceptions of the purposes of ATCs is reflected in policy statements made at the ends of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1968, the Health Department's *Model of Good Practice* for ATCs stated that: 'The adult training centre should meet the needs of the mentally handicapped adult in a setting of adult social and working conditions. It should offer realistic work training so that some at least may in due course find a job in open or sheltered employment' (Quoted in Carter, 1981: 154) illustrating the vocational approach to teaching people with learning difficulties (see Chapter 2). By 1977 the National Development Group for the Mentally Handicapped (NDG) argued that the purpose of ATCs should be: '[F]or continuing education...there is a substantial

body of evidence both from research and from practice which indicates that mentally handicapped people of all ages are able to improve their abilities and respond to skilled teaching.' (NDG 1977, quoted in Carter, 1981: 155). As the next section explains, by the end of the 1970s the purpose of ATCs had begun to change.

3. 1970 to 1974: *Better Services and the decline of ATCs*

Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped (1971) set out ambitious, expansionary plans for services. This included expanding provision supporting housing, community inclusion as well as employment support (see *Better Services*' underlying principles (viii), (ii) and (xv), (v): 11). For employment, an extensive expansion of ATC provision was central, with plans to make 72,200 places available by 1991 (Mittler, 1979: 16). The expansion of government provision continued to be the favoured method of employment support throughout the 1970s, reinforced in both the 1976 consultative document *Priorities for Health and Personal Social Services in England* (DHSS 1976a cited in Mittler, 1979: 16) and *The Way Forward* (DHSS, 1977 cited in Mittler, 1979: 17). It is argued that underpinning the *Better Services*' strategy were broadly two policy goals: that of reducing by approximately half (from 60,000 to 30,000) the numbers of people with learning difficulties in NHS controlled long-stay institutions; and shifting responsibility for providing services from the central government controlled NHS to Local Authority-controlled social services (Race, 2006:95). A social services' controlled ATC expansion was central to the increased day service provision required to cater for this movement of people

back to the community. The expansion did not materialise and the rest of this section analyses the combination of national and local policy developments which saw a shift from a 'train to place' (Kings Fund, 1984: 33) approach favoured by ATC provision to the 'place to train' (Kings Fund, 1984: 33) approach of the embryonic supported employment model of the 'Real Jobs' initiative of 1990-91.

The context within which the *Better Services*' paper was drawn up and implemented was characterised by intense economic, political and ideological change and instability. There were four changes in government over the course of 15 years from 1964 to 1979 which led to inconsistency in policy priorities. *Better Services* was overseen by a Conservative Health Minister using a Labour party report, the Seebohm Report of 1968, and it is argued that this limited the extent to which it was initially implemented (Race, 2006: 88). At an economic level in 1974 the UK witnessed, 'far and away the biggest crash since 1929' (Armstrong et al, 1991: 121). The Labour government of 1974-79 oversaw a massive retrenchment in fiscal spending between 1976 and 1978, with public expenditure cuts of 2.5 percent in 1976-77 and 6 percent in 1977-78. The Conservative governments which followed continued this trend for according to some authors, both economic and ideological purposes (Gooby and Dale, 1981: 257). Their first two budgets in 1980 introduced net cuts of £1600 million and £900 million, 'leading to an absolute reduction in overall expenditure that year, and in later years until 1984' (see HMSO, 1980, Cmnd 7841 cited in Gooby and Dale, 1981: 257). In this way first Labour then Conservative governments adopted a 'pragmatic but progressively radical strategy, especially but not solely, to reduce Local Authority spending' (Atkinson and Wilks-Heeg, 2000: 60-1) setting a context within which a *Better Services*' approach became discredited and a strategy of 'Care in the Community' took shape. Care in the community

policy and its relevance to employment support is discussed in detail below. An initial period of relative expansion of ATC provision which preceded economic crisis (Mittler, 1979: 16) was largely due to the availability of capital finance, enabling some community-based hostel development as well as some ATC build (Race, 2007: 99) though, as discussed in Chapter 5 and illustrated by Appendix 1, often led by a newly empowered voluntary sector.

A financial climate may have proved to work against *Better Services* policy aims and strategies, however important ideological developments began to draw out contradictions at the heart of the document as well as in the ATC structures through which its employment support was offered. Internationally during the 1960s a body of research, including some from the UK, was beginning to coalesce around a set of concepts now associated with 'normalisation'. *Changing Patterns in Residential Services for the Mentally Retarded* (1969) first outlined the principles of normalisation, with its emphasis on service provision seeking to support the integration of people with learning difficulties into the community. Jack Tizard who, as Chapter 2 discusses, was a leading proponent of an approach to service provision which valued the integrationist and developmental nature of employment, contributed to the collection as well as being consulted by the 1968 Seebohm Committee and it has been argued that *Better Services* was imbued with these values (Race, 2006; Mittler, 1979). For some, an integrationist document which relied on the segregated employment support of ATCs produced a 'double bind':

Historically, social interventions for the mentally handicapped have veered between these two extremes; on the one hand attempting to 'free' the mentally handicapped (by education) and on the other hand then trying to

control their movements (by segregation). If this argument is acceptable, it follows that training centres are in a double bind. Put boldly, setting up adult training centres may actually prevent the integration of some mentally handicapped people into 'ordinary' society. (Carter, 1981: 165)

Research suggests that the segregation of ATC provision was systemically sustained. For example, ATCs were most often the only option considered by teachers of students with learning difficulties (Mittler, 1979: 107). As the Warnock Report (1978) showed, people with learning difficulties hardly used a range of mainstream employment support services available from the then Manpower Services Commission – such as Young Persons' Work Preparation Courses and Training Opportunities Schemes – with little evidence of local Disablement Resettlement Officers offering these to people with learning difficulties (Mittler, 1979: 107-8). Carter discusses how, due to the ways in which ATCs were overseen by Local Authorities, social exclusion may have been reinforced, often despite ATC staff's attempts to overcome this (Carter, 1981: 171). An example discussed is the Local Authority insistence at one ATC of continuing to use Local Authority transport, instead of public transport, to bring service users to the centre. The reasons being that numbers on the Local Authority coaches had to be maintained to justify costs and retain sectional budget allocation. Reflecting on the lack of integration into the mainstream facilitated by ATCs Mittler points to the fact that of a total of 24,252 people with learning difficulties then in ATCs only 934 (less than 4 percent) entered open employment, while only 97 (0.4 percent) entered sheltered employment (Mittler, 1979: 134). Staff attitudes regarding the purpose of ATCs varied but most of those surveyed by Clarke in 1980 agreed

that ATCs were less about providing developmental opportunities and more about occupying time and completing 'contract work' (Carter, 1981: 156, 289).

4. 1974 to 1990: From Social Education Centres to Care in the Community

The lack of integration into local communities offered by ATCs was one of the key concerns of the National Development Group for the Mentally Handicapped, set up in 1974 and the impetus for that group's attempts to re-configure ATCs into Social Education Centres (SECs) (NDG, 1977, Pamphlet 5). For the NDG, SECs could potentially act as a means of integration, a bridge between specialised provision and mainstream communities. In his 1979 publication *People Not Patients* in a section entitled 'Pushing the Walls Aside' Mittler argues:

If an SEC is to be the chief resource for mentally handicapped adults in the community, it will need to develop working links with a wide range of community agencies and to ensure that there is no possibility of the Centre being isolated from the resources of the community. (Mittler, 1979: 142)

The NDG sought to address the contradictions of seeking to encourage social integration through segregated provision by changing the nature of the provision, adapting old service delivery methods to new ideological priorities. An element

undermining these aims was growing staff disillusionment following the assumption of ATC control by social services departments. In 1974 responsibility for staff training was devolved to the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, following the winding up of the Training Council for Teachers of the Mentally Handicapped. This council had developed a one year college-based course leading to the award of the Diploma in the Training of Mentally Handicapped Adults, phased out in 1980. The new Certificate in Social Service replaced this. Staff expressed strong reservations about the relevance of this new form of training, affecting their morale and skills specific to working in employment oriented services (Mittler, 1979: 127). The lack of commitment to the new award and the move towards social services control was reflected in the express wish of the National Association of Teachers of the Mentally Handicapped that responsibility for SECs should be removed from social services and transferred to education departments (Mittler, 1979: 140). SECs aimed to provide 'social education' (Mittler, 1979: 137-41) which included teaching communication, interpersonal and social skills, as well as more employment-specific and academic skills (Mittler, 1979: 137-41).

In many ways, how successful the SECs model might have been becomes a moot point as Local Authority spending – upon which SEC expansion depended – fell from the late 1970s on. Coinciding with this, from 1981 onwards a strategy of care in the community developed at policy level, largely replacing the priorities and aims of *Better Services*. Following the *Care in the Community* White Paper (1981) community care began to move from the 'bricks and mortar' (Welshman and Walmsley, 2006: 39) approach of previous government-run, buildings-based services to one more 'explicitly associated with supporting family and home-based care' (Welshman and Walmsley, 2006: 39). Notions of community became more associated with 'friends, family, neighbours...the voluntary and private

sectors were equally important' while Local Authorities began to assume the role of enablers and purchasers of service, supporting and funding others to implement care (Welshman and Walmsley, 2006: 39). Scull argues that the triumph of community-based over institutional solutions lay in the ideals of community care which 'allowed governments to save money while simultaneously giving their policy a humanitarian gloss' (Scull, 1984: 130). Camden Local Authority policy during this time reflects the centrality of budgetary concerns. The cost benefits of delivering community services through grant and other financial support for the voluntary sector was acknowledged in 1981 when Camden Social Services Committee adopted a strategy to 'harness the energy and resources of the voluntary sector' (LBCLHA: SSC, 9/9/1981) stating that 'if these services were carried out by the Local Authority the cost would be considerably greater' (LBCLHA: SSC 7/2/1980).

Community Care: Agenda for Action (1988) assessed developments in community care in the 1980s, identifying what it regarded as central problems to the wider application of community care values. It argued that failures in handing over responsibilities for local services from national health services to local social services had caused the programme to stall and many of the recommendations the report made were accepted and enacted in the subsequent White Paper *Caring for People: Community Care in the next Decade and Beyond* (1989). Though not addressing employment support directly the direction of this critique established a context within which employment services have been provided since. *Caring for People* articulated the belief that government provision was bureaucratic and inefficient. It reinforced the importance of Local Authorities adopting the role of 'enabler' rather than a provider of care. Policy argued for the separation of purchaser/provider roles, with Local Authorities as purchasers and a newly empowered voluntary and private sector as provider in a 'mixed

economy of care' (Griffiths, 1988). These elements have particular relevance for the supported employment model as discussed below. The objectives of *Caring for People* were enacted in the National Health Service and Community Care Act (1990). As Welshman and Walmsley argue, subsequently community care has become shorthand for the introduction of the market, with competing 'providers' from the private and voluntary sector selling their services to public authority 'purchasers' (2006: 41). As they also note, the care in community movement of the 1980s fundamentally changed the economic basis of care, which changed from being a social good in the 1970s to a market commodity from the 1990s onwards as universal welfarism was replaced by a targeted provision driven by market priorities. Section three traces this development for employment support.

In terms of employment support during this period this drift away from universal state-led provision is articulated most clearly by *An Ordinary Working Life* (Kings Fund, 1984). The document highlighted the low transition to mainstream employment rates of ATCs within the context of a critique of the 'train to place' model ATCs used. It argued for the adoption of a 'situational support' model (Kings Fund, 1984: 23) with an enlarged range of voluntary, private and public agencies providing 'real jobs' (Kings Fund, 1984: 20) with mainstream employers and supporting individuals in them in accordance with their diverse needs. Though not a complete articulation of the supported employment model as it developed over the next decades the document provided a bridge to it.

5. 1990 to 2010: From public to private/voluntary sector provision

At an ideological level the journey for people with learning difficulties being supported in mainstream employment was all-but completed by 1984 with the publication of *An Ordinary Working Life*. However, it took considerably more time for this to take effect at policy and practice level. Central to achieving this was the embedding in service provision of the provider/purchaser roles by which market relations could be instilled in employment support. Outlining the responsibilities of these roles was a central task of the key documents of this period, *Valuing People*, *Valuing People Now* and *Valuing Employment Now* as discussed below.

The practice journey towards market relations in employment support began in 1990 with the 'Real Jobs Initiative' (RJI) (National Development Team 1992). Eight supported employment schemes existed before 1990. This number increased to 79 by 1992, largely as a result of the RJI, coordinated by the National Development Team based at the Hester Adrian Research Centre, Manchester. Schemes were guided by care in community aims and principles, re-stated in the Care in the Community Act (1990) and summarised by then health secretary Kenneth Clarke: 'Our policies are aimed at improving social care services by ensuring that they are properly tailored to the needs of individual people. This requires a clear, locally determined set of priorities, and effective collaboration between public, private and voluntary agencies' (Pitt, 2011). RJI employment schemes were run by a combination of private and voluntary sector agencies – providing 39 percent – and SECs and other Local Authority agencies (NDT, (a), 1992: 7). The Association of Supported Employment Agencies resulted from the RJI, developing regional networks of supported employment agencies and other interested bodies including the Employers Forum on

Disability, MENCAP's Pathway Employment Service, the Kings Fund Centre and the Mental Handicap in Wales Applied Research Unit. Research throughout the 1990s sought to develop a theoretical understanding of the value of supported employment (see for example, Kilsby and Beyer, 1995, 1996, 1997; Beyer, Goodere and Kilsby, 1996). Thus by the mid to late 1990s major structural and ideological elements of a supported employment model were in place.

Since the Real Jobs Initiative the input into employment support of private/voluntary sector agencies has increased, supported by a shift of financial resources from the Local Authority public to private/voluntary sector. This is true of a range of social and other services. For example, between 1993 and 2010, the private sector's share of the UK older people's residential care market, from all funding sources, rose from 53% to 71% as council provision shrank (Pitt, 2011). Voluntary and private sector provision of residential care for people with learning difficulties had begun to develop in Camden earlier than this. As the Timeline shows (Appendix 1) the Camden Society acquired its first group home as early as 1976, establishing supported accommodation in Gloucester Avenue, Camden, housing 6 adults funded through the Local Authority. Local Authority spending on voluntary sector organisations has risen five-fold since 1984. Between 2001 and 2004 alone investment in the sector increased by 62 percent (www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk, accessed August, 2009) with services contracted out or 'outsourced' across social care and other Local Authority departments (Atkinson and Wilks-Heeg, 2000: 132).

The growth in numbers of supported employment agencies has been underpinned by this contracting out approach. In this sector, by 2010 a system was in place which required private and voluntary sector providers to compete for funds made available by, in particular, the Department of Works and Pensions

(DWP). For example, in March 2010 the DWP published its list of 'Preferred Bidders' for the latest round of 'Work Choice' programmes. There were 28 'Contract Package Areas', mostly awarded to the Shaw Trust who won 16. (<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/supplying-dwp/what-we-buy/welfare-to-work-services/specialist-disability-employment/> accessed 7/4/2010). The system is not without its critics and both the British Association for Supported Employment, formerly the Association of Supported Employment Agencies, (<http://www.base-uk.org/news/index.htm> accessed 3/4/2010) and a House of Commons report of 2010 (Works and Pensions Committee, 2010) pointed to the poor and potentially unfair administration procedures of the 'prime contractor' model. Research also suggests that this model may lead to providers 'creaming' clients most likely to successfully obtain and keep a job in order to fulfil contract quotas (Finn, 2009).

Policy developed during the 1990s with regard to the legal and human rights of disabled people to access employment on an equal footing with non disabled people. The Disability Discrimination Act of 1995, and the strengthened version which followed ten years later, centrally established the concept of 'reasonable adjustment'. This ensures legal recourse for disabled people in cases where '(a) a provision, criterion or practice applied by or on behalf of an employer, or (b) any physical feature of premises occupied by the employer' (DDA, 1995: 98) discriminates against disabled people. A body of case law has since developed and important victories for, mostly, physically disabled individuals have been won (see for example Archibald vs Fife Council, 2004 cited by PCS, http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/equality/disability_equality_toolkit/understanding_reasonable_adjustments.cfm accessed 18/5/2011). However, with specific regard to how effective the Act has been for people with learning difficulties, research has suggested that the DDA of 1995 accepted an individualised and embodied notion of disability and failed to address the specific discrimination faced by people with

learning difficulties (Roulstone, 2003: 122; Barnes et al, 1999). Also, North American studies suggest that since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (1999), equivalent in many ways to the DDA, employment for disabled people has barely been affected (Russell, 2002: 117).

Despite the shortcomings of a rights strategy illustrated by this critique, the concept is central to *Valuing People* (2001). The document sets itself the task to 'Champion rights, independence, choice and inclusion' (VP: 3) on behalf of people with learning difficulties. The document drew on the wider ideological context within which issues such as citizenship based on rights and responsibilities, along with personal, individualised choice loomed large (Welshman and Walmsley, 2006: 218-233). A public discourse of 'responsibilities, efforts and reward' (Sacks, 1997: 233 cited in Deacon and Mann, 1981: 428) informed the New Labourite ideas of, in particular the first Labour administration from 1997-2002 concerning 'the responsibilities and duties' of those accessing services and benefits (Deacon, 1998). This philosophy scaffolds the *Valuing People* document.

According to *Valuing People*, choice is increased by access to private and voluntary sector-run, targeted and individualised services (Race, 2007: 100). Supported employment can be considered as one aspect of the broader goal of finding solutions for people with learning difficulties in the mainstream. The so-called 'choice and control' (Race, 2007: 97) aspects of the paper outline how little more than information and limited financial help can be made available to help 'health facilitators from learning disability teams enabl[e] people to access mainstream health facilities...and targets for numbers in work are promised, without explanations of how this is to be achieved beyond reference to WORKSTEP, a scheme designed for all disabled people and more accessed by

physically disabled people' (Race, 2007: 97). Welshman and Walmsley point to the fact that compared to *Better Services* (1971) *Valuing People* 'is surprisingly devoid of statistics...where in 1971 there were clear and measurable targets for what was then regarded as improvement, in 2001 any target was vaguely worded and by any standards hard to measure' (Welshman and Walmsley, 2006: 95).

An issue more explicitly analysed in *Valuing People* is the link between benefits and employment. The document states that 'We recognise that the interaction between benefit rules and income from employment can result in disincentives for disabled people' (84-5). It outlines various improved incapacity benefit linking schemes and higher earnings disregards for those moving in and out of employment. Changes to WORKSTEP, the *New Deal for Disabled People* and the Disability Living Allowance are all detailed with reference to how they might support employment opportunities. Linking benefit changes in this way was a consistent policy concern throughout the term of Labour administrations between 1997 and 2010, and feature strongly in *Valuing People's* follow-on documents, *Valuing People Now* and *Valuing Employment Now* discussed below. This is despite research suggesting that very few people with learning difficulties have accessed employment as a result of such schemes (see for example Goodley and Nourizi, 2005; Working Group on Learning Disabilities and Employment, 2006; Grover and Piggot, 2007; Redley, 2009).

Valuing Employment Now (VEN) (2009) re-states many of the themes developed in *Valuing People*. VEN is unique in that it is the only major national policy document dealing specifically with the employment of people with learning difficulties in UK history and this section concludes by considering some of its key strengths and challenges. The document offers a very clear definition of supported employment:

Supported employment, as developed in the USA, is a well evidenced way of helping people with learning disabilities...to access and retain open employment, through the core components of: vocational profiling; job finding; job analysis and placement; job training; and follow-along services. In the UK context, we know that detailed welfare rights advice is also an essential factor. (VEN, 2009: 101)

Potentially, this discussion of components could frame job support provision and the document does offer some guidance on minimum quality standards and qualifications for job coaching – with a promise to work with agencies to develop these subsequently. It advises on how job coaches can be financed from funds already available through supported employment streams such as *Access to Work* and a new Specialist Disability Employment Programme (formerly WORKSTEP) (51-53). With the change in government in 2010 the quality standards had not been established by June 2011 and it was unclear how new funding streams would operate.

Also stated in VEN is what counts as full time work '(defined by the DWP as 16 or more hours a week) because this is when most people will access in-work Tax Credits and be significantly better off financially' (23). Unfortunately, no actual examples of this outcome – of people being better off through working 16 hours per week – are given. The document as a whole lacks examples of concrete outcomes happening from and likely to happen as a result of employment support policy as codified in this document. VEN can be characterised as what Race has called an exercise in 'progress in process' (Race, 2007:100) with ideas for ways of improving inter-agency collaboration and the organisation of

employment support at a broad level but very little in the way of definite statements of intent. A few examples illustrate this. Chapter one 'Growing the presumption of employability' states:

Social and healthcare commissioners should build an expectation of work for adults with learning disabilities into contracts for providers of support, so that they see their key role in encouraging people to think about work and get the advice they need, and helping them to move nearer to the labour market. (VEN: 2009: 36-7)

Policy stops short of strategies or setting outcome targets by which to measure success or failure, instead stating very general aims for providers and purchasers to work together to encourage an expectation that people will 'move nearer the labour market'. As discussed above (see especially Grover and Piggot, 2007) this phrase could simply mean moving people from Employment and Support Allowance (formerly Incapacity Benefit) to Job Seekers Allowance, a key welfare strategy not predicated on actually delivering employment (58-62). In the section 'Key actions for government departments' (43) the document encourages ministries to 'strongly promote' work opportunities, assures us that ministries have a 'commitment to people with learning disabilities' without providing details, and reassures us that ministries will 'examine ways to incentivise employment outcomes' within government. This diplomatic language seems to work hard at not committing any of the six ministerial departments involved in formulating the document to actually delivering anything.

The theme of partnership – at a number of levels of administration – is central to VEN, with agencies working in partnership to develop support strategies individual by individual. In that sense, this continues an ideological approach discussed above which, from the 1980s onwards, has become focused on a critique of universal services and which prioritises individualised need. An example illustrating this approach is: 'Employment for people with learning disabilities will only be achieved if services and support are brought together around a person, rather than slotting people into the support each service currently provides' (VEN: 34). Specific advice and examples of how the plethora of public, private and voluntary sector agencies will do this are missing with only an exhortation that funding will be used 'creatively around the person to achieve a job outcome' and that the partnership agencies 'make sure someone is identified to help the person navigate this process' (34).

The individualised approach to welfare provision is echoed in VEN's partner document, *Valuing People Now* (VPN) (2009). Five themes for employment strategy outlined here include growing the 'presumption of employability'; a 'person centred pathway'; 'customised employment'; 'braiding' funding, by which it means the joining together of funding from funding streams already available pre 2009; and 'engagement' with local employers (VPN 2009: 87-8). This continued the retreat from universal provision with, in its place, an ideological framework which private/voluntary sector agencies must reference in order to attract government funds. VPN provides a vision of how an integrated employment support system might work, uniting public, private and voluntary sector education and employment agencies around each individual centred on; 'a support broker...to help people use their individualised budgets for employment support, embed supported employment in the new Foundation Learning Tier, consider employment awareness training for family carers and expand the

Getting a Life demonstration programme' (88). It is a vision of private or voluntary sector-based employment brokers taking on tasks formally done by social services, advising people on how to spend their individualised budgets in order to increase their chances of competing successfully in the labour market, supported by (unpaid) family members.

Discussing some of the wider social implications of the wholesale shift to market provision of employment and social care, and in the days before his collaboration with the New Labour politics of the Third Way, Giddens reflects on the dual nature of policy supporting it:

On the one hand, in encouraging the free play of market forces, neo-liberal political philosophy unleashes detraditionalising influences of a quite far reaching kind. On the other hand, the very traditional symbols which these influences help to dissolve are held to be essential to social solidarity. It is not surprising that New Right doctrines mix liberal freedoms and authoritarianism – even fundamentalism – in an uneasy and unstable fashion. (Giddens, 1994:40)

This section has illustrated a process of both decentralisation of services at a practice level and centralisation at an ideological level illustrated in the plethora of policy development during this historical phase.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the key policy developments in employment and employment support from 1944 to 2010. Centrally, it looked at the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (DPA) (1944); the Mental Health Act (1959); *Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped* (1971); the policies of 'Community Care' enacted during the 1980s; the Real Jobs Initiative (1991) and at the extent and nature of the supported employment model that arose in the period to 2010. There are five key themes arising from this analysis discussed here. These are: 1) the compromised nature of employment services for people with learning difficulties following 1944; 2) the contradictory, 'double-bind' (Carter, 1981: 165) nature of the Adult Training Centre provision that arose following 1959; 3) the economic, political and ideological upheaval of the 1970s-1980s that led to the dismantling of ATC provision; 4) the growth of the market in care; 5) the *Valuing People* documents.

This chapter has shown that the provision that was developed for disabled people following the end of World War Two was based on a political compromise which addressed the fears of employers and organised labour. In effect, the DPA led to the growth of segregated employment training provision for many disabled people, which rarely led to trainees being reintegrated into mainstream employment. The requirement that employers of over 20 workers should ensure three per cent of their workforce was drawn from the registered disabled was never fulfilled (Bolderson, 1980: 174). My research suggests that in any case the DPA provision was rarely accessed by people with learning difficulties who, for a short time post war, found mainstream employment as they had during the war. The key contribution of the DPA was not in its practice but in establishing the

principle that government had responsibility to provide employment-related provision for disabled people, including those with learning difficulties.

The Mental Health Act (1959) developed a 'bricks and mortar' (Welshman and Walmsley, 2006: 39) approach to this provision, initiating a system of Adult Training Centres aimed at developing employment-relevant skills for people with learning difficulties. The Act represents a move on from the 'occupying time' (O'Connor and Tizard, 1956 90-92) approach of occupation centres for people with learning difficulties that had been in place pre-war, in that it envisaged using the time of people with learning difficulties to some socially useful purpose. The Act sought to shift the focus of care for people with learning difficulties away from the National Health Service and residential provision to community based provision, representing an approach based on a partial re-integration of people with learning difficulties into community life. As Clarke points out, this aim was contradictory from the beginning, given ATC's 'double bind' (Carter, 1981: 165) of integrating people with learning difficulties through the agency of segregated, albeit community-based provision. These contradictions were central to the ATC system unfolding during the economic, political and ideological crisis of the 1970s and 1980s.

This period saw a shift from the 'train to place' (Kings Fund, 1984: 33) approach favoured by ATC provision to the 'place to train' (Kings Fund, 1984: 33) approach of the embryonic supported employment model of the 'Real Jobs Initiative' (RJI) of 1990-91. Ideologically, the Kings Fund's *'An Ordinary Working Life'* (1984) marked the end of the ATC approach, while in practice the RJI of 1991 kick-started the type of supported employment schemes that came to replace the ATC's 'bricks and mortar' provision. The RJI facilitated the growth of market relations in employment support and training for people with learning difficulties,

drawing on the market principles of Care in the Community initiatives more generally.

As Section 4 above discussed at length, the *Valuing People* documents from 2001 to 2009 set the modern day context for employment and employment support of people with learning difficulties. As that section noted, though an important acknowledgement of the idea that employment is important to people with learning difficulties indeed, as *Valuing People Now* (2009: 30) argues, a human right, in terms of practice the documents are flawed. The central weakness argued by this thesis is that proponents of *Valuing People* ideologies continue to argue the case for employment support schemes led by market forces, provided on a case by case, individualised basis. These schemes argue against the need or relevance of universal provision funded through social welfare, despite the fact that since 1990 market-driven schemes have overseen a fall in the rate of employment for people with learning difficulties from 7 percent to 6.5 percent during a period – from 1997 to 2008 – of historically high rates of general employment.

This chapter sets a context for the research findings. Chapter 5 builds on the analysis developed here to examine in detail the transition of service provision from public to private in the north London borough of Camden. It will do this through analysing oral history evidence on borough services built from the testimony of those involved in developing them at both Local Authority and voluntary sector level.

Chapter 5: How policy informed practice: the London Borough of Camden, a case study

Introduction

The aim of the chapter is to look at how employment in Camden reflected national themes expressed in national policy discussed in Chapter 4. It describes how policy informed the growth and practice of Camden's leading voluntary sector organisation for people with learning difficulties, the Camden Society. The chapter adopts a case study approach. The literature argues that this provides an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research (Yin, 1984: 23). Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Social science in particular has made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods. Yin defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984: 25). Silverman argues in support of case studies (Silverman, 2000) pointing out that individual cases can have resonance beyond specific sites studied, provided a rationale for why they were chosen is provided. This has already in large part been set out in Chapter 1 and this chapter adds to that by analysing interview data provided by people with learning difficulties, parents of people with learning difficulties, volunteers and professionals providing services for people with learning difficulties and/or who have provided services in the past. Interview data is supported by analysis of archival materials collected from the three archives detailed in Chapter 3.

There are three sections in this chapter, each of which looks at specific historical phases shadowing the analytical methods used in Chapter 4. The sections are: 1) Adult Training Centres in Camden after 1959; 2) Local Authority and voluntary sector innovation: ideological gaps and new partnerships; 3) From 1990 to 2010: The commodification of care and the relative decline of Local Authority influence.

1. Adult Training Centres in Camden after 1959

Post World War Two, the expansion of ATC provision was accompanied from 1946 onwards by the growth of what is today MENCAP. Initially called the Association of Parents of Backward Children (APBC) (Shennan, 1980: 5-9) the organisation ran on the basis of a collective of semi-autonomous local groups which both campaigned for better provision and provided services themselves. In north-west London in 1951 a group was initiated by Cyril and Elsie Graefe and Olga and Howard Brookstein, parents of children with learning difficulties:

The whole thing was set up by Cyril Graefe and his wife Elsie. They had...a mentally handicapped girl I think who was I believe at one of the hospitals up in Shenley [Harperbury Hospital]. They were an exceptional couple...[They] recognised that there were very limited resources available so they set up sort of a social club which would give the families a bit of relief and give the kids some sort of entertainment. (Martin, interview 50)

Olga and Howard Brookstein had both been in a Nazi concentration camp during the war and this may have reinforced their opposition to any UK-based remnants of eugenicist ideas, such as long-stay hospitals, and their determination to build community-based alternatives for their children and others like them:

I think they were lecturers if I remember rightly. They lived in Golders Green... We used to see a lot of them because they used to come swimming with us...I know they were both in Germany because they both had tattoos on their arms because you could see them when they were swimming. They were both in a concentration camp. (Yvonne, interview 53)

Peter Mittler has also commented on how memories of Nazi atrocities inspired his work (Mittler, 2010). The groups began as self-financed, self-help groups, providing services according to local needs and ideas:

People worked because it was their children...We used to have them [meetings] regularly, every month, usually in somebody's house...It was parents helping themselves to help their children, because that was the only way it could happen...But nothing came easy. You've always had to fight for everything. (Yvonne, interview 53)

While the local APBCs campaigned and developed services, labour shortages persisted post war and meant many people with learning difficulties continued to

find mainstream work in their local communities, often through friends and family networks. For example, Henry Raiss, who unfortunately died in the weeks before a scheduled interview, worked as a porter at Euston Station during the war. Reg, who subsequently worked for many years at Euston train station, found work immediately after the war in Mansells, a confectioner in Kentish Town, Camden close to where he lived:

Jimmy Roberts used to drive the trains, so any time I went up to Newcastle or anything, ['Reg] are you doing anything?'...I said, 'Nothing why?' He said, 'Would you like to come down have a ride round with me?' 'Yeah', I said...now you know why I join the railway. But then before I started them two jobs I worked in another one, Mansells, which make cream crackers and all the pulp. Easter eggs, well I was a pulp maker of the Easter eggs. (Reg, interview 34)

In this sense, the development of ATCs in the years following the 1959 Mental Health Act and the London County Council's (LCC) expansion of provision in particular after 1961, may have reflected shrinkage of mainstream employment opportunities in north London from the end of the 1950s onwards as labour shortage became less acute (see White 2007 especially: 195 - 217). As the ranks of non-disabled workers swelled (See Paul, 1997 especially: 64-111) employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties shrank. The integration into mainstream society that employment had afforded during war was replaced by the partial, community-based, segregation of ATC provision.

Few records remain of Camden's first industrial adult training centre at 44a Fitzroy Rd. The building was built in 1866 to house Hopkinson's Piano manufacture (LBCLHA: Piano Factory, 19/12/1978). It was probably adapted for training people with learning difficulties following the LCC development of ATCs after 1961, under the control of the local health authority (LBCLHA: MOH and Director of Social Services Report, 16/2/1971). In 1971, following the publication of *Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped* (1971) and the change in responsibility for ATCs to newly established Local Authority social services department, the Fitzroy Centre was closed and the service transferred to Greenwood Place in the Kentish Town area of Camden. Sixty-five male trainees worked at the Fitzroy as it closed, all Camden residents. No industrial machinery was transferred to Greenwood Place suggesting industrial training at the Fitzroy centre was based around handicraft skills, as at most other LCC centres (Jackson, 1965: 123).



Fitzroy Adult Training Centre (1960s – 1971) (Photo L. Humber, September, 2009)

Greenwood Place opened in May 1973. The building was leased by the London Borough of Camden from Wilson Lovatt and Sons at a rental of £20,000 per annum. Costs of staff to trainee were put at £365 per year at the – increased – full capacity of the new centre of 150. This made total staffing costs of £35,000 per year in 1971, with a total cost to the Local Authority of £55,000 per year (LBCLHA: MOH and Director of Social Services Report, 16/2/1971) who will have been supported by provision under the *Better Services* White Paper (1971). Trainees were paid on a sliding scale after an initial 'ability assessment' and it was hoped that 'some will be able to find outside employment' (LBCLHA: Camden and St Pancras Chronicle, 18/5/1973: 7).

I used to work at Greenwood Place with my friend Singh. We used to pack toys together. We got paid once a week on a Friday, a brown envelope with £5. Mr Thomas was the manager. (Robert S, interview 61)

The centre provided courses teaching personal and social skills, with progression to industrial training on power driven woodworking machinery, assembly work using hand tools, printing and packaging 'when a trainee is considered to be functioning at the highest level he can attain' (LBCLHA: Thomas, S, 1982). It is likely that machined work was done by men, while women found work in packaging and in the laundry, which was installed in 1974 to take in washing from the Authority's social services Department under contract (LBCLHA: Social

Services Committee (SSC), 27/3/1974). Janet, in 2009 a manager of voluntary sector provision based at the Greenwood centre supports the above:

When this building was opened, there was this side, there was next door where the refugees [are], there was Mail Out. And if you ask people they'll tell you in Mail Out it was for the people who couldn't walk...there was a washing machine...where the Jazz Café is now, that was a washing area. So there was a laundry up there, people used to work in the laundry. Where the Zen room is, that was the woodwork room. Where the TV is, I dunno what was in there, some sort of printing machine. (Janet, interview 55)

Greenwood ATC service users provide differing opinions of the quality and value of the service, which centred on contract 'packing' work for Bryants Toys, University College Hospital and probably others, as well as laundry work for the Local Authority:

[T]he hospital work I dunno if they came every week but I know we used to get the galley pots and cotton wool and pack them all in a little bag and sticky tape and they used to go in like boxes. I think it was UCH but I know it was one of the hospitals. I used to love the hospital work, used to sit there with all the girls on the table, used to have a good old chat...Used to get nice dinners at Greenwood, because it was from about nine till three or four, so proper work, like working place Greenwood. (Margaret, interview 32)

Another service user found the regime and work disciplines involved in contract work stultifying:

Eight months into it I can't stand it any longer. 'You gotta do this, you gotta do that, gotta sort this out, gotta sort that out, cook your own meal.' Then suddenly two of us went out to shopping, so I bought the potatoes back. They didn't like it, the potatoes, little weeds, er seeds coming out. So I said, if you don't like these potatoes you can have 'em, I'm not taking them back. I said I'm gonna get out of here, do what I want, go where I want, eat what I want. I said next time I'm going up to 245, talk to Viv about getting a full time job. (Richard, interview 33)



Greenwood Place Adult Training Centre (1973-1984) (Photo, L Humber, September, 2009)

'245' and 'Viv' are references to the Camden Society, the local voluntary sector organisation which developed out of the north-west London APBC. They suggest that by this time – the early 1980s during which Richard attended Greenwood ATC – a voluntary sector alternative to ATC provision was already known about by people with learning difficulties locally. The Camden Society's employment support – GROWTH – opened in 1980 (see Timeline, Appendix 1). It suggests a growth of alternative provision at the same time as a deterioration of Local Authority Greenwood provision. By 1981, it was reported that there were no ramps or fire precautions at the Greenwood Centre and no maintenance work had been carried out in order to 'avoid over expenditure of the planned maintenance budget' (LBCLHA: SSC, 11/5/1981) illustrating the deterioration of service provision by the end of the 1970s. A backdrop of 'no growth' in the social services budget for 1981-82 (LBCLHA: SSC, 21/1/1981) provides the wider financial context. A local resident, George Odwell, set up 'Friends of Greenwood' in order to lobby the Council for more resources, while local pubs held collections and ran competitions to raise money for the centre (LBCLHA: Hampstead and Highgate Express, 1/5/1981: 14) indicating a level of community support for the provision. In 1988 staff shortages threatened the continued running of the centre (LBCLHA: Mental Handicap Services Liaison Group (MHSLG), 4/10/1988).

By this time the Local Authority had begun to restructure its employment support away from the ATC model. It set up a small number of 'foster worker' schemes to encourage local employers to take on people with learning difficulties (LBCLHA: SSC, 14/9/1983). As Chapter 4 shows the Local Authority was aware of the advantages of finding ways to support voluntary sector organisations through developing partnership work and through direct funding. A change in provision had begun under the impetus of financial constraint on local authorities at the beginning of the 1980s. The following section discusses how this transfer was

strengthened and supported through planned policy and partnership development.

2. Local Authority and voluntary sector innovation: ideological gaps and new partnerships

The process of transfer could not have begun without at least an embryonic viable voluntary sector alternative. This had begun to develop out of the north-west London APBC. From a parent-led voluntary organisation in 1971 this organisation, which came to be called the Camden Society, recruited the first of its full time workers, Viv, and began its development towards a major voluntary sector agency. The influx of paid employees, coupled with a new layer of radicalised parent volunteers during the late 1970s and early 1980s, changed the nature of the organisation and the services it provided:

I think the point when the Society started employing people must have been a big change. And of course your employees are people with ideas and they come from outside and they're not looking at your own little rut. They're looking beyond. (Dianne, interview 54)

It had been an organisation in transition, from Cyril's idea of a relaxing place for the kids – bit of relief for the family...and that was quite happily going on at that level, to something which I started, raising the game slightly in terms of public profile, raising money and looking at sort of

wider issues. And then Chris came along and it was the launch pad to something totally different, to the genesis to what it is today. (Martin, interview 50)

One of the first sub-organisations the re-shaped Camden Society set up was GROWTH (1980), a committee tasked with developing employment opportunities, one of, if not the first non-governmental, locally based employment support provision in the country. Following GROWTH, in 1982, the Society published *A decade for change?* (Camden Society, 1983) setting out its thoughts for a comprehensive service for people with learning difficulties in Camden. This was further developed by publication of the Society's *Service Development Strategy* the following year which was presented for discussion to the Social Services Committee (LBCLHA: SSC, 14/9/1983). This document, among other things, recommended that the Local Authority should do more to encourage local employers to take on people with learning difficulties, and should set up an employment development office to 'enable Pathway [MENCAP]' schemes in the Borough (LBCLH: SSC 14/9/1983). The Society offered its own version of employment support and training as the Local Authority considered an approach to MENCAP:

I found out that MENCAP had approached Camden [Council] to open a 'Pathways Scheme'...So I went straight to Camden and said, 'I hear MENCAP have approached you, we want to approach you as well. I'll present you with a business plan'. And we won the contract and so the employment has never looked back. (Jean, interview 51)

The opening of the Society's first café training centre followed:

Applejacks opened in '85 and that was quite an interesting story. I found some money...Chris...he'd been to meet with Ken Livingstone who were big buddies because he still worked at Camden then I think...And we were supposed to be getting a fortune, £50 grand or something. Anyway, of course, it never came to be... Anyway we somehow found this place in Eversholt and it opened, I think in October '85...We found a grant from Camden Council and they used to employ, in those days, a guy who was physically disabled himself, a guy who helped us find £10,000. It was a bequest for mental health. Anyway he and I discovered that it could be used for learning difficulties. So he helped us find this £10,000, that's what we opened Applejacks with which wasn't a lot. You know, the first year's rent was £6,000. (Viv, interview 46)

As Chapter 4 reflects, by 1984 at an ideological level, thinking on employment support had shifted to favour employment training sited in mainstream employment (see *An Ordinary Working Life*, 1984). In this sense, the Applejacks model represents a middle-way compromise between segregated ATC provision of Local Authorities and the newly emerging 'situated support' model (Kings Fund, 1984: 34) outlined in *Ordinary Working Life*.

The Applejacks café service sought to train people under a slogan of 'Real Work for Real Wages' in a range of food industry skills in order that they might transfer to similar positions in the mainstream. The scheme hoped to provide support for

ex trainees transferred to mainstream positions (Applejacks, 1987: 5). A strength of the model was thought to be its intrinsically integrationist nature, as people from the local community used the café and met the workers and as workers used local facilities (Applejacks, 1987: 23). A 'major weakness' (Applejacks, 1987: 25) was that trainees remained on benefit, denying them the possibility of financial independence and the associated financial and personal skill development – as well as improved life choices – that come with it. How being paid for work, the relationship between payment for an individual's time at work and how that structures life narratives and personal development is discussed in Chapter 7.

In 1987 the Society opened Work-Shop, offering 'an integrated employment service, covering assessment, in-house training, referral and support for other training and adult education, pre-employment work, job finding and employment support' (*Workshop and Applejacks: An employment service*, 1990). The Society considered the possibility of offering the two services on a franchise basis but did not develop this. In 1990 around sixty people regularly used Work-Shop (*Workshop and Applejacks*, 1990: 17). In 1992 the Society opened the Mill Lane project, an award-winning gardening skills training project, with the service building itself built by service users. In 1993 the Society took over the running of the Greenwood Centre as the Local Authority considered its closure:

Social services were shutting it down completely so there was a core group of 5 men that had no service. So Camden Society took that over. It was open on Mondays and Tuesdays at the time...we opened it up again on a Thursday and a Friday. And then people started to say how much they liked it so we opened up five days a week, and it sort of grew from

that really...I think they shut it down because Shootup Hill, Mayford and Pepperfield all opened up. So people in here all went off to those day services. But those few people that were here when I came...didn't want to go off to other services. (Janet, interview 55)

The Society largely maintained the Mail Out part of the centre as it had been under Local Authority control and continued to fulfil contract work, providing sheltered employment there as during ATC provision. Over the course of the 1980s, a range of employment support opportunities had become available via the voluntary sector.

Another employment development during the 1980s was that the Local Authority offered a small number of employment opportunities:

'85-86 was a really good year for placing people. Amy was placed, Anna...they went to work for the Council, a lot of people got jobs in the Council in the mid '80s, maybe a bit later. (Viv, interview 46)

Successful integration into a number of these Local Authority roles was patchy. According to a Local Authority source, six people were placed in the mid to late 1980s and no more have been employed since (Olivia, interview 58). Of those one left soon after starting as a result of being 'sent to Coventry' (Richard, interview 33) by his colleagues; another moved on to a better job; two were still – in 2009 – in place and one held on to his post until 2008 but finally left after, according to the source, many years of being ostracised by his workmates.

The growth of Camden Society provision counters the decline of that of Local Authority. Services were transferred from sector to sector through an interlinking set of personal and professional relationships and inter-agency initiatives. For a short period during the early 1980s, as embryonic ideas for care in the community began to gather political momentum, these partnerships produced innovative ways of providing services, fuelled by a sense of radicalism in the learning difficulties field, illustrating what Giddens terms 'the mutual dependence' (1990: 235) of agency and structure. There are many illustrations of this. For example, a Camden Society manager, John C, was attracted to working in the sector because it reflected his previous work in Africa working with the poor:

I'd been working on very radical community projects, you know, that were about changing the economic situation of people living in extreme poverty, very radical, left wing, revolutionary in their focus...When I came back to England, and I did lots of research for various people, but the area that I chose to be, because I wanted to continue that type of work, was learning disability. (John C, interview 60)

The rise of the People First movement which, in Camden, attracted groups of activists with and without learning difficulties is another illustration of this. From the early 1980s, the People First movement began to gather pace, at times supported by powerful political allies:

Around the latter part of '81 early '82, MENCAP in London...decided to invite people from day centres in London...to come along to a group and

share experiences...In the summer of 1982 we held our first conference, the group that became the organisers, what was called the 'Participation Forum'...In 1983 we were going to do another conference...and then the GLC, as they were, came along and said, we'll offer you the use of County Hall...for free, and we'll throw in Ken Livingstone for good measure to kick the thing off. And we said, yeah. (John H, interview 62)

Thus, at a national political-ideological level there was a perception that changing how people with learning difficulties lived was both necessary, and possible. At a local level there are a number of indications of the close working relationships between voluntary and Local Authority sector individuals and agencies during this time. A vivid illustration of the development of new systems of service delivery focused on voluntary sector agencies, was the Camden Society's Living in Camden project (LinC) through which Camden Council initially financed and supported the Society to relocate Camden residents in St Lawrence's long stay hospital back in the community as part of the care in the community, long-stay hospital closure programme.

As Scull has argued, part of the success of care in community policy was its 'humanitarian gloss' (Scull, 1984). At a local level, returning former Camden residents back to their communities became a humanitarian cause, as Richard B who was centrally involved with the LinC project says, a 'rescue mission'. LinC began in 1985. Based on its growing reputation for sourcing and supporting community housing (see Timeline, Appendix 1) the Camden Society was awarded one of 12 pilot schemes tried during this period, and one of the few run by a voluntary sector organisation (Cambridge et al, 1994: 10-11). The Camden Society was responsible for managing the processes of transfer and subsequent

community-based care. In this way a government initiative was distanced by both central government and Local Authority by offering a local group of people and their networks an opportunity to take responsibility for service provision. The Camden Society worked with the Local Authority through a set of formal and informal structures ranging from formal bodies – such as the Mental Handicap Services Liaison Group created in 1988 – to personal friendships. These provided a two way network, through which the voluntary sector was able to express its concerns and by which the Local Authority, and central government operating through the agency of Local Authorities, were able to attempt to frame a debate and subsequent developments. The professional and personal relationships between bodies became important new structuring mechanisms of a system of provision, framed by and framing the action of individuals and groups. These networks and how they operated are illustrated in the data. For example, Denni, an experienced care worker was recruited by the Council to head up the LinC programme, overseeing the partnership with the Camden Society:

There was a senior manager in Camden [Council] called Nick and he decided to apply for one of the Government grants, I think they were called the pilot projects, for closing the old long-stay hospitals...I was also part of the group who did the, what we called 'normalisation' training in those days...There were a group of Camden residents in St Lawrence's hospital...he had no learning disability experience...would I go with him and assess the Camden people in St Lawrence's. And I'd never been in a long-stay hospital before although I was working in this home in the community. So Nick and I went down and met quite a few of the Camden people in the hospital.

What he wanted to do was quite radical. He didn't want to just bring everybody out into a residential care home – it was the time of '*Ordinary Life*' and community participation. So, we...decided we would look at the 20 youngest people in the hospital. So we wouldn't look for the most able or the most disabled, or try for compatible groups or whatever, we would just look at 20...it was 17 that came out...He put this proposal together and got the funding. And they decided that rather than do it through the Council they would look for a voluntary sector to do it in partnership. Now, whether Richard B knew Nick at that time, because Richard B then became the other kind of motivating force, so it was primarily Nick and Richard that kind of put everything together. (Deni, interview 48)

As both Nick and Richard reflect, these were exceptional and short-lived developments:

In those days Camden was a pretty exceptional authority, you'd never get away with the stuff we did then...Ken was essentially my boss in Camden, and he was just a star, he became director and he buckled when, er, when we had to undo everything...when Camden collapsed in on itself. But he would always chance his arm and he would always promote, erm, learning disabilities and mental health services. (Nick, interview 44)

Nick...was the learning disability manager for Camden Council. You could say it was a lucky combination of Chris, myself, a few others on the committee, Richard Shaw and Nick, who was a very ready ear, someone

who wanted to do things differently...the time was...naïve, but in a kind of positive way because you could do anything you wanted...if you had the right ideas and you could make the right connections you would pretty much get the support to do different things. (Richard B, interview 49)

The LinC scheme was one way in which Camden Local Authority pursued its transition from being a direct service 'provider to an enabler' (Atkinson and Wilks-Heeg: 68), moving away from the role of direct provider of services to that of purchaser of services. What Richard B describes as naiveté of these innovative arrangements was exposed when, in 1991, the LinC programme became one element of a financial constraint pushing the Camden Society close to bankruptcy (CSA, Chief Officer's Report, 24/3/1991, agenda items 1.5, 2.15, 2.2). The backdrop to this was that at the beginning of 1988-89 financial year spending on people with learning difficulties in the borough was 'one of the highest levels of expenditures per head in the country', with a budget of £2.3M. In 1988 this was frozen and money intended to improve the service was withdrawn (LBCLHA: Mental Handicap Service Liaison Group, 4/10/1988) largely due to nationally imposed local government spending restraints on which Chapter 4 reflected. A 'dowry' system, under which each individual leaving St Lawrence's hospital was given money by Croydon Health Authority (which ran the hospital) proved to be inadequate to support people in their communities leaving the Camden Society to make up the shortfall (Cambridge et al, 1994: 84). Delays in benefit payments for former St Lawrence's residents led to the Society having to use its own resources to support people:

We were being subbed money [by the Camden Society] each week. So...say your money from the DSS was £100, you would get to keep £26, X amount was meant for food and the rest for you. Well basically...Camden Society would front the £26 waiting for some big back-dated cheque and it just went on and on. (Robin, interview 52)

An immediate consequence of the process of financial readjustment outlined above – at both voluntary and Local Authority levels – was that labour costs were reduced. For the Camden Society as a result of financial crisis the salaries for the Chief Officer and the Finance Officer were cut by £5000 and £6000 respectively while for a time the Society's evening clubs were in danger of closure (CSA, Chief Officer's Report, 24/3/1991, agenda items 1.5, 2.15, 2.2). Also, union negotiated wage rates for Camden Society workers were de-recognised, and staff contracts were renegotiated (CSA, Chief Officers Report, 24/3/1991, Recommendations item 6). This was shadowed at the time by a similar process in the Local Authority itself, with a re-organisation of Social Work teams resulting in a strike lasting nearly a year from June 1991 to April 1992. As a result of the strike, 113 council workers lost their jobs with obvious subsequent labour cost reductions (NALGO, 1991).

There is some evidence that during the mid 1980s Sir Roy Griffiths may have personally intervened to help support the development of new relationships between, in this case, a group of concerned Camden parents seeking to develop services, the Local Authority and private sector agencies:

Denise: People coming out of hospital, as they were then, were getting dowries to have houses built. If [like us] you kept your son or daughter at home there was no money to build...We took a room in the Kings Fund, we could only afford half a day but we had lunch as well, and we invited directors of social services, anybody at all...

Pat: Housing Associations...

Denise: Anybody at all. And we invited Sir Roy Griffiths...the Care in the Community man...and people said oh, don't invite him, he won't come to anything, he's not well...So we wrote off and we got a letter back saying I've never been approached by parents I'd love to come, and with that a whole load of people decided, other directors of social services. It was quite a big do...

Pat: Then, I dunno, money suddenly, Camden more or less agreed that yes, this was necessary...Then we had to find premises...

Denise: St Pancras Housing Association said yes, we'd like to do it. We've got a house in Marston Street and Camden owns one next door that was derelict. And Camden said yes, we'll give our house. Together the two houses can be knocked down and made into a suitable house for three people with wheelchairs.

(Parent Group, interview 52)

The suggestion from this is that Sir Roy Griffiths' attendance at the meeting arranged by this independent group of parents enabled them to develop a novel, private sector based approach to service provision in this instance. This example of a market-driven, independent sector solution to service provision supported

the approach outlined subsequently in the Act of 1990 and since. It could be argued that the period of Camden innovation, through developing new working relationships between public and independent/voluntary sectors, informed the ideological template that has guided the growth of market relations in the provision of care services since then, an 'unintended consequence' (Giddens, 1990: 235) of pursuing this 'humanitarian' cause.

Having said this, the brief period of innovation 'collapsed in on itself' and the ideological space in which initiatives had been tested began to close, signalled at the end of the 1980s at policy level by the 'Griffiths Report' and the Care in the Community Act of 1990. Section three below examines how this affected services in Camden.

3. From 1990 to 2010: The commodification of care and the relative decline of Local Authority influence

As discussed, the major employment services offered by the voluntary sector in Camden were in place by 1993, with the Camden Society offering food industry training through its AppleJacks model of cafes, packing work at Mail Out, gardening skills through its centre at Mill Lane and employment advice and skills training available through its Work-Shop provisions. An important lesson it had learnt from the previous period of expansion, during which it had relied heavily on grants and financial support solely from the London Borough of Camden, was that this approach to funding was insecure:

There'd been some quite sort of, turbulent financial times and [Steve] had rescued it and it was on a reasonable footing when I joined, although still very, very heavily dependent on Camden for its funding...about 80 or 90 percent of its funding came from there. It still had quite a few things that weren't 'washing their own face' and therefore acting as a drain on the organisation, didn't really give anything to it, didn't really add anything. And we thought the Society was quite vulnerable still, and we never wanted to be in a position of vulnerability again. So...one of the first things I wanted to put in place was a kind of strategy going forward which gave the Society a sort of clear sense of direction and where it was aiming for, also made it less dependent as a sole source of funding geographically, so it could branch out more, even more into other boroughs. But also to look at larger contracts and different funders as well, so that we weren't always dependent on Local Authority contracts all the time. (Debbie, interview 59)

On a general level the Society has been able to do this, drawing with particular success on 'Future Builders' funding:

A trend in recent years has been for the Public Sector effectively to off-load the provision of services to the Third Sector and to Charities. So that Charities are increasingly providing services that would have been provided traditionally by Government...So there have been a number of bodies set up in recent years, such as Future Builders, basically to give a mixture of grants and loans to Third Sector organisations to provide services. We got in early with Future Builders and we are now recipients

of one of their biggest loans and grant combined. It was to put in place an integrated employment and training centre that people could walk in off the street and utilise. We needed a property to do it, we also needed to move from our previous properties...gradually we found this place in Holmes Road and through using the Future Builders funding we've been able now to establish the employment and training centre. (Debbie, interview 59)



The Camden Society Head Office (2008 -) (Photo, L. Humber, August 2009)

In this relatively oblique way – at the level of being able to support employment training to a higher quality by developing a better training space – the Society had been able to take advantage of the marketisation of employment provision discussed in Chapter 4 prompted by the 1990 Care in the Community Act and

developed further by *Valuing People* (2001). However, on another level it lagged behind in accessing more of the substantial investment in supported employment made by governments since the mid-late 1990s, often being relegated to what one worker called 'grunt work' of employment support and largely missing out on the key contracts allocated through the 'prime contractor model' critiqued in Chapter 4. The Camden Society participated in this employment support market as a sub-contracting organisation, employed to match known local people with learning difficulties with potential local employers. It can be argued that this less financially rewarding position resulted from its own employment support model developed, as we have seen, relatively early on. The café and gardening training facilities can be considered relatively capital intensive, with investment in the 'bricks and mortar' of service delivery. This model is both less flexible, in terms of fixed costs for the Camden Society, and may have been less person-centred than the ideological – and financial – climate of 2010 might like.

The dominant prime contractor model current in 2010 acts to frame the language and behaviours of each link in the economic chain. For example, a Camden Society employee described the process of bidding for employment support funding:

And all this thing, like *Pathways to Work* being the new one and its being kind of contracted out to these big providers that have big contracts with Job Centre Plus now so it kind of slowly, palming everything out to these big providers and people have got to attend these five work focused interviews otherwise there's sanctions on their benefits, which reminds me of Re Start really. And I think you know they still do it by letter, they still struggle with the fact that people don't always pick up a phone. I think

they're quite inaccessible...But they, we are being forced, Job Centre Plus, have now, well the government isn't it, its DWP, have made them integral to everything now. So for example, we've got an LSC contract and we get paid for sign posting people for further learning. We can only class them as further learning if it's a Job Centre Plus programme and we can prove that. Erm, the LDA link to Job Centre Plus and what their targets are, so I don't think we're ever gonna get away from it. (Helen, interview 43)

The level of technical knowledge required to access funding, expressed in often dense jargon, is a vivid illustration of how economic relationships between a central authority and a sub-contracting agency are able to inculcate 'standardised modes of behaviour' (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940; Kuper, 1983: 56; Giddens, 1990: 96) into service delivery, how the market shapes and disciplines the language and behaviours of service providers. Through the establishment of market relations central government both decentralises operational control of service delivery to a plethora of small and large local and national agencies like those studied here, whilst at the same time, as discussed in Chapter 4, centralising the terms under which services are delivered through a strict financial and ideological framework, mixing 'liberal freedoms and authoritarianism – even fundamentalism – in an uneasy and unstable fashion' (Giddens, 1994: 40). In the case of Camden, the result is an improved infrastructure, at both facility and technical knowledge levels, capable of delivering services, but very little in terms of an improvement in employment rates for local residents.

Conclusion

The 1980s was a period of social and ideological flux, nowhere more so than in the provision of services for people with learning difficulties. In Camden, against a backdrop of a Care in the Community policy agenda which sought to close long-stay institutions and replace them with locally based, locally sourced and funded services, innovative individuals from both local government and voluntary sector organisations came together in formal and informal networks and relationships to create new ways of delivering services. In employment support, new structures took shape out of these alliances as responsibility for service provision passed into the local voluntary sector, a period of innovation serving both the financial needs of the Local Authority and the aspirations of the increasingly empowered voluntary sector. Ideological flux opened up a political space in learning difficulty, filled in Camden both by activists with learning difficulties and their new People First organisation, and their radicalised supporters. This led to short-lived innovation in the borough and the development of novel ways of delivering services, including employment support services, built from networks of personal and professional relationships established within and between Local Authority and voluntary sector organisations. During the 1990s, the early advances made in Camden, with the establishment of what might be called an integrationist version of employment support, began to lag behind the most advanced national developments.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, as a market of employment support had been strengthened, centrally enforced bidding criteria and outcomes-based assessment served to structure the behaviours of supported employment

industry contractors and subcontractors. Through the bidding process the Department of Work and Pensions 'acts upon [the] actions' (Foucault, 1982: 220) of service providers structuring the present and future ways in which that service is delivered, framing the relationship between service and service user.

Chapter 6 builds on this analysis of the shifting nature of agency-structure relationships in the context of the specialised systems of post-16 education and training for students with learning difficulties.

Chapter 6: How students with learning difficulties are prepared for employment in the post-16 education sector

Introduction

This chapter examines how, from 1996 to 2010, the ideological themes and service developments discussed in chapters 4 and 5 influenced the provision of post-16 education and training for students with learning difficulties. In particular this chapter interrogates how Further Education (FE) colleges were encouraged to shadow wider changes in service delivery for people with learning difficulties by adopting a more 'corporate approach' (Tomlinson, 1997: 34) and by developing individualised education programmes. The chapter assesses how far they have been able to achieve this and to what effect. The chapter begins with an analysis of the key themes and aims of the Tomlinson Report (1997). Section 2 looks at time and space issues that set a context for students' experience of systems of specialised education. Section 3 examines the perceptions and reflections of FE tutors and managers in order to establish how they interpret and value their work with students with learning difficulties; the value they place on linking learning to employment; and the appropriateness of their own training. In this sense, the chapter represents a review of progress from the aims outlined in Tomlinson in 1997 to the quality of service delivery as captured through interview and other data in 2010. A question underpinning analysis is how successful the turn to the market over this period has been in improving the education and employment opportunities of students with learning difficulties.

1. Tomlinson and the Further Education context

Two seminal reports produced in the 1990s that affected subsequent policy and thinking on Further Education provision for people with learning difficulties were: *Inclusive Learning; the report of the Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities Committee of the Further Education Funding Council* (HMSO 1996) chaired by Professor John Tomlinson; and *Learning Works: the report of the Further Education Funding Council committee on widening participation in Further Education* (FEFC 1997). This report argued that widening participation in further education colleges involved both increasing overall rates of participation and extending participation from under-represented groups, including students with learning difficulties.

Inclusive Learning (1996) was the result of a three-year enquiry into the educational needs of and provision for adults with disabilities and/or learning difficulties in England. It arose from the requirement of an Act of Parliament, in 1992, that the new national funding council for further education should 'have regard' for such students in all its work of funding, development and evaluation. The Committee commissioned research into the nature and extent of provision, the actual and potential demand for further education and the current requirements of law, and also reviewed existing academic research (Tomlinson, 1997: 184).

The core of the report is the notion of 'inclusive learning', which places the responsibility for providing appropriate education with the teachers, the managers and the system (ultimately, with society), rather than problematizing the student as one with a deficit (Tomlinson, 1997: 184). As Tomlinson reflected, a good

education system is not merely about offering 'access to what is available, but also the making of what needs to be available accessible: the moulding of opportunity' (Tomlinson, 1997: 184).

The Tomlinson Report states many of the themes subsequently echoed in the government paper, *Further Education for the New Millennium* (DfEE 1998) and further developed in *Valuing People* (2001), *Valuing People Now*, and *Valuing Employment Now* (2009). The report emphasises developing learning environments, or 'learning eco-systems' (Tomlinson, 1997: 56) tailored to the needs of individuals, with individual learning programmes for each student. This individualisation of provision is reflected in the document's definition of inclusive learning by which the committee meant; 'the greatest degree of match or fit between the individual learner's requirements and the provision that is made for them' (Tomlinson, 1997: 23). In order to do this the report argues that colleges need to 'pursue a corporate approach to learning and to develop their capacity to respond to different approaches to learning and to identify individual learning goals' (Tomlinson, 1997: 34). It points to the similarities in this regard between inclusive FE provision and general 'health and social services and voluntary organisations [who] face the same challenge as further education – that is how to individualise...planning' and service provision (Tomlinson, 1997: 34). As such, the report is a product of the process described in the previous two chapters of adopting market or 'corporate' values in service delivery.

A requirement that FE colleges should provide specific employment preparation – supported by work experience placements – for students with learning difficulties is first stated in *Through Inclusion to Excellence* (Learning Skills Council [LSC], 2005). Reviewing the way it funded FE courses the LSC established the principle that by 2009 all courses should have an explicit employment-focus element and

that courses that did not would no longer be funded by the body. In 2007 *Progression through Partnership* (Department for Education and Science et al, 2007) reiterated this policy direction echoing earlier 'vocational' approaches to teaching people with learning difficulties. These documents link the ideas of employment as a vehicle for social inclusion directly into the practice of FE, using ideological and financial frameworks to govern how colleges structure their 'learning eco-systems' in line with government aims.

2. Time and space

Section two examines aspects of the time young people with learning difficulties spent in schools and post-16 education and how their experiences were shaped by the nature of school and college space – to what extent the knowledge they developed was 'spatially determined' (Brown and Durrhiem, 2009: 915). It goes on to assess the length and nature of the time students attended colleges, and how time spent in special school and experiences of the transitional processes associated with progressing through school may have impacted upon students. In particular the section explores whether students perceive college time as meaningful.

Time, change and continuity

The 27 student participants had an average attendance at college of between five and six years, with some attending longer than this. This compares with a

standard two and three year FE careers of students without learning difficulties. Some students with learning difficulties attended college for long periods in one go, though the more common experience was of students attending numerous colleges and/or college courses at one college in between short periods of temporary employment or unemployment. So, for example, Jane (interview 11) had attended at least four different colleges since leaving school in 1976, had had numerous periods of work experience either attached to college courses or provided by other social services, as well as a part-time job for eight years. When interviewed, Julie had been attending her current college for 4 or 5 years, though she couldn't be sure exactly how long. This 'fractured' (Laing, 1959: 157) education time, characterised by multiple transitions from one institution to another, one group of educators and peers to another, is a common experience for people with learning difficulties. Students transferring from one course to another or repeating courses at the same college or at different colleges over time was common. For example, when interviewed in 2008 Harshal (interview 9) had recently returned to College after 8 years in a job preparation sheltered work placement. Before that, in 1995 he began his college career after leaving special school:

Harshal: It was IT course, and one year was Maths and the other one was reading, writing. Yeah.

Question: How long were you at college for that time?

H: Erm, it was er, '96 I moved on to another college. Because they send me to a different college because they want me to learn more, er, more at the other college as well and I went there to er, do cooking, cooking

lessons and do reading, writing more and do Maths, like that...I be there until 2000. (Harshal, interview 9)

By the time his course finished in 2010 this totals 17 years of college and job preparation, assuming his college did not enrol Harshal on another course at the end of the 2009-2010 academic year.

This research found that courses tended to repeat core curriculum elements and subjects, replicating learning experiences in, for example reading, writing, mathematics, Life Skills and communication skills, often at the same level one standard or below. These same basic skills elements also feature in relatively new, employment-specific courses, such as Preparing for Work Skills. (See Skills for Working, 2006). Research shortly after Tomlinson (Bradley and Hegarty, 1981) found what the authors described as 'an overemphasis on basic skills' in many FE courses for students with learning difficulties. My research suggests there has been little substantial change since then.

One reason for this pattern of repetition of course materials was described by one tutor as a consequence of colleges regularly changing examining boards:

With these tests I don't actually think, they're not, who are they now? Who is it? They change, every few years, we just change. This is gonna change, we're not gonna do, we're not gonna be with this body this year. The whole, it's gonna be roughly the same stuff just different paper work that we've all gotta get our heads around. Roughly the same things. There'll still be health and safety no doubt and that sort of stuff but that means they'll be getting a new examining board so it's a new certificate.

So it's another certificate and we can start 'em back at level one again because they haven't done that certificate. (Anise, interview 37)

Students are assessed, by different bodies in different years on the basis of a repeated learning experience, amassing certificates from different examining bodies at similar levels of academic achievement. Tutors at both FE colleges expressed doubts about how highly potential employers valued these certificates (Anise, interview 37; Cheryl, interview 38). Inherent in this process of repetition is a lack of clearly defined academic progress. The research suggests that students moved from one college to another, one course to another, one examining board to another, with very little sense of moving from one point to another intellectually. It was not clear how the learning prepared them for the next stage in their lives or gave them a sense of what might be possible in future time. Indeed, future time might consist of more college time in a college career without a definite end. It can be argued that college in this sense has become an exercise in 'occupying time', a return to a form of service provision extensively critiqued here and in the literature.

Heidegger argues that time can be considered as 'the becoming of the possible' (Heidegger, quoted in Giddens, 1990: 4). Building on Heidegger's ideas, Giddens' theory of structuration posits that 'life passes in transformation' (Giddens, 1990: 4). Central to the purpose and aims of all educational institutions and learning processes is the notion that the process acts to developmentally transform in numerous ways those undergoing it, transforming individuals from student to potential employee, from unskilled to skilled, from adolescent to young adult. My research questions how far this transformation is achieved by the specialised systems of education developed for students with learning difficulties.

A consideration of the transformative nature of time spent in systems of specialised education informs analysis of school time more generally and in particular transitions – or missing transitions – in school time. None of the students interviewed experienced what is, for the majority of students without learning difficulties, the typical phase of transition from primary to secondary school education at around 11 years of age, largely missing out on the psycho-cultural development inherent in this transitional phase (Evangelou et al, 2008). All students interviewed experienced what might be termed either all-through schooling at one special school – in some instances from as young as 2 to age 16 – or serial transitions consisting of frequent school change. A significant number also attended out of borough or out of London residential placements in place of or in addition to in-borough education. For example, Larry details his school history of serial transitions:

I went to Kentish Primary School, then Torianno Junior School, then three special schools and now the Harrington gardening scheme. (Larry, interview 16)

Nigel (interview 21) told me, 'I went to several schools', while Mike (interview 18) tells of three schools – having tried but not attended at least one other school – before going on to attend first City and Islington Further Education (FE) College, then the Harrington Gardening Centre and training scheme and finally, when interviewed, the Camden-based Leighton Project's special teaching unit. This is a total of 6, perhaps 7, teaching units attended before the age of 20. Of those attending the Leighton Project at time of interview, two thirds of the students (6) had attended a different FE college course after school before attending the

Leighton Project. Transitions research suggests that numerous transitions, here from one special school to another then on into a series of post-16 courses and colleges, invite problems of peer rejection, loss of self-esteem and intellectual under-achievement (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Beyer and Kaehne, 2007; Fry, 2007; Butterworth et al, 2000).

The all-through model is provided by both Camden's Swiss Cottage School – with schooling (for some) from age 2 to 16 – and Islington's Samuel Rhodes School (age 5 to 16), schools attended by many participants. Students attended school at the same site, often carried to and from school on the same Local Authority transports, from Primary school age to school leaving at 16 or later. Evangelou et al (2008) stress the developmental importance of successful transition from primary to secondary, citing in particular the impact on self-esteem and self confidence according to the extent to which more and new friendships are developed (2008: 5). Crucially also, the authors point to the high success rates of SEN students including those with learning difficulties experiencing this transition process who, the research finds 'do not experience a less successful transition than others' (2008: 4). This research suggests that, properly supported, students with learning difficulties are able to transfer successfully and benefit developmentally from the enhanced access to a wider group of peers transferring from primary to secondary supports. These developmental opportunities are not available to students who remain at one all-through school throughout their career as exemplified above.

Evangelou et al also discuss rates of bullying which result directly from transition, reflecting that rates for students with learning difficulties, though still unacceptable, are not appreciably higher, at 37 percent of all transferring students, than those of students without learning difficulties at 25 percent.

Chapter 7 analyses bullying in the wider community, a common occurrence in the lives of people with learning difficulties. The point here is that students with learning difficulties are not substantially more likely to be bullied in mainstream schools and that special schools and units do not shield students from it. My research found many accounts of bullying in special schools. For example,

Before, I was at school but I didn't really like school anyway, so, 'cause a lot of people picked on me and a lot of people used to call me names and things like that. So I wasn't very comfortable in school. (Ethan, interview 6)

I like making friends. And I don't like being bullied, 'cause at my old school I was bullied a lot...I had my money taken away from me, I had my bag thrown up on the, not the lockers, what you call those, you know where the cleaner stays? He's got like a little hut thing. I had my bag thrown up on the locker and I had my erm, I think it's known as a 'swirly' when they stick your head down the toilet and then they flush it. Every day I was bullied at that school. (Salvador, interview 24)

A central point of the limited peer relationships afforded students in an all-through system is that this offers less opportunity to escape the bullies by accessing other peer groups, either in transition from primary to secondary or simply as a result of the greater number of possible friendship groups in larger mainstream schools, being unable to develop alternative, relatively bully-free groups.

College spaces

This section explores issues of space. In particular it develops an analysis of the 'spatially determined knowledge' (Brown and Durrhiem, 2009: 915) different research spaces construct, using this to interpret the reflections of participants in terms of the spatial contexts – the various spaces of the FE colleges investigated – which provided the backdrop to participants' experiences. Though now set in mainstream colleges, courses for students with learning difficulties interviewed were separate from mainstream courses. Students were taught in separate classes and there was very little integration of students during break times (Field notes, 6/9/09). From my own observations it appeared that break times for students with learning difficulties were at different times from students without learning difficulties (Field notes 6/9/09; 24/9/09). Although general college space was shared, specific areas of it were allotted to students with learning difficulties while general space may have been shared at different times with students without learning difficulties. My research found little evidence of strategies to develop inclusion into the mainstream student or learning structures of colleges. Initiatives found were ad hoc and left largely to individual tutors to arrange and sustain. One tutor reflected on the lack of integration:

For years and years and years we asked the...student activities people to collaborate with us...We've had them come in and explain: 'These are the sort of activities you could do, is there anyone have anything that they'd like?' And our students always say, oh, we'd like a little room where we could maybe watch films or music or something at lunchtime when the café is absolutely full of sort of other students sort of taking the place

over...We'd like this, we'd like that, we'd like to be involved when you go to Alton Towers...And nothing has ever happened. Nothing. They come, once a year we manage to get one to come over and they'll be really nice and they'll be writing all our ideas down and I have yet to see anything happen. (Anise, interview 37)

Both City and Islington and Kingsway colleges have forums for students with learning difficulties to raise issues. These have been set up and are run by learning difficulties tutors and support staff. Outside speakers are invited to these meetings as the above account explains. This usually occurs at the beginning of a new academic year, when student union or college officials are invited to address the group about what the college offers. It is clear from the account that the tutor feels college authorities have failed to lead on developing an ethos of inclusion at the college, here through the failure to include students with learning difficulties in the social activities of college.

The passage of speech above asking for a 'little room' may be taken to be the tutor's interpretation of her students' desire for their own separation when students without learning difficulties are 'taking the place over' in shared college space. There is, then, both an expressed wish for inclusion and a desire for separation, as interpreted by the tutor, suggesting that the reasons for the lack of in-practice inclusion in general college life may be more complex than simply institutionalised exclusion.

One interpretation of the lack of inclusive practice results both from inconsistent and inadequate leadership from colleges to meaningfully include students with learning difficulties in the shared space of college, and from ambiguous calls for

inclusion – coupled with the implied withdrawal from college life illustrated by the desire for a 'little room' – from students with learning difficulties, expressed here by the tutor. An 'unintended consequence' (Giddens, 1990: 235) of the tutor's interpretation of her students' wishes is to sustain their exclusion within college. Reflecting on his relationships with students without learning difficulties at City and Islington College, David illustrates the cause and effect of the lack of opportunity to meaningfully share space, the roots and consequences of this included segregation:

I feel like they diss you here sometimes, walk past you. I would be... I dunno if I could go out with a crowd 'coz I don't think they would treat you good. They'd take the mick and use you and abuse you. (David, interview 4)

Out of a lack of support or opportunity to develop relationships with students without learning difficulties grows a fear of how David might be treated. In the above illustration this fear – growing largely out of suspicions that he is being 'dissed' – sits alongside the desire to be included in the larger student body implicit in 'I dunno if I could go out with a crowd'. David doesn't know if he could but he clearly wants the opportunity – and confidence – to find out.

As this chapter goes on to discuss below in its analysis of data gathered from tutors, the partial withdrawal may be a defensive 'co-construction' (Rapley, 2004: 177) expressing not only the concerns of students with learning difficulties but also those of their tutors, a projection of tutors' desire to sustain what Goffman terms the 'protective custody' (Goffman, 1961, 1990) they regard as part of their

role. Goffman describes protective custody as a means by which carers are able to prevent 'Self-belittling definitions...from entering the charmed circle, while broad access is given to other conceptions held in the wider society, ones that lead the encapsulated child to see himself as a fully qualified ordinary human being, of normal identity' (Goffman, 1990: 33). This is a useful concept and will be explored further in this chapter and in Chapter 8, where the thesis also returns to the question of space and its relevance to social inclusion. Section 3 below considers how teaching staff use the time and space available to them to prepare students for post college careers.

3. Learning theories and educational practice

FE staff are key agents in students' transition from education to employment (Tomlinson, 1997). This section assesses how well they are equipped to perform this role. It analyses the testimony of FE college tutors and managers working at the two FE colleges researched. The section assesses learning and teaching concepts guiding tutors' practice. It reflects upon their perceptions of the role of FE colleges with regard to students with learning difficulties, and looks at how they perceive the links between college and employment.

Tomlinson (1997) found that tutors working with students with learning difficulties in FE colleges had a great many personal qualities and worked hard to provide as good an education for their students as they were able to given the resources available to them. However, he also found standards of training were 'not sufficient' (Tomlinson, 1997: 191). A key theme of the Tomlinson Report was to

develop an 'adequately funded, nationally coordinated staff training initiative' (CSIE, 1997). This duality, of a group of workers often driven by ideals for social equality and inclusion, coupled with a paucity of specific training in the theory and practice of working with students with the learning difficulties, is clearly illustrated by this research. It found that the majority of those who worked in the field – both in colleges and in the wider service provision industry – came into the industry 'almost by accident' (Clariss, interview 40) from a range of other educational and professional backgrounds, largely learning to work with students with learning difficulties on the job. Being motivated by the desire to help is potentially a strength. However, lack of professional skill can undermine an overall affect:

I hadn't worked personally with disabled children but I've been responsible for funding and erm, you know dealing with parents of disabled children and it is across the board...You get to have a sort of fairly broad general knowledge of issues of all of the different types of special educational needs that come forward and over the years you just learn to, you know, how to deal with different groups of these. (George, interview 41)

Question: How did you get into working with people with learning difficulties?

Clariss: Almost by accident I'd say...I had no experience at all before that working with learning disabilities of any kind so it's been quite a big learning curve for me. (Clariss, interview 40)

I did the PGCE for 14 plus so I don't know if there are PGCEs that you can do just for people with learning difficulties and really most of the stuff that we learnt was really focused on 14 to 19 years olds. But c'est la vie. It was a bit frustrating really but erm, perhaps didn't feel as valued. I don't know, I think there's a thing that people that teach people with learning difficulties aren't necessarily as valued. (Cheryl, interview 38)

Staff had little specific preparation or training in learning theory and teaching skills for working with students with learning difficulties. Two themes from the data were a lack of clarity concerning the general learning capabilities of students, and a more general confusion about the purpose of FE learning difficulties provision. For example, during a group interview of five tutors a view of people with learning difficulties as 'ineducable' emerged and remained largely unchallenged:

T: Thing is with someone with a disability, part of their disability is that they can't learn, they can't absorb information, so I think that's...

D: Their limitations.

(FE College Group, interview 39)

In another interview, students' lack of educational progress is put down to lack of ability in the students themselves:

Some people are maintaining skills rather than going up and up and up, which is what a lot of people with learning difficulties find it hard – to maintain their skills. (Anise, interview 37)

Expecting – much less supporting – academic progress is unlikely given either of these approaches. Also, as shown above, this same participant explained earlier how students' educational progress is held back by her college changing from one curricula provider to another resulting in her students repeating similar course materials one year after another.

The lack of theoretical understanding of the ways in which people with learning difficulties learn was a key theme outlined in Tomlinson (1997). As Dee et al point out (2006) research since Tomlinson, including *Through Inclusion to Excellence* (LSC 2005) has focussed on how much provision is available rather than on its quality. As the authors show, there has been substantial development in learning theory with regard to people with learning difficulties in the years since Tomlinson (see especially Dee et al 2006: 98-110) but this research found little evidence of them in the testimony of the front line staff in FEs. This suggests a lack of systematic development and teaching of learning theory in colleges. This is failure at a systemic level, a failure of colleges to prepare their staff adequately in order to achieve a key Tomlinson concern to 'Develop an adequately funded, nationally coordinated staff training initiative for inclusive learning to cover teacher training, management training and organisational development' (Tomlinson 1997: Key Recommendations).

There was confusion regarding the overall purpose of FE colleges for students with learning difficulties. A number of participants thought of college largely as a

type of care service with an educational veneer. In a general spirit of pastoral 'protective custody' tutors found ways of 'recycling' students on to different courses, in the absence of anything else for students to do:

R: I'm sorry. I know we're recycling our students but they don't have anything else to do. This is a very big part of their lives, so I've enrolled him again I'm afraid. He was hanging outside of college and...and he said oh, I've got no course. I said come on then darling. (FE Group, interview 39)

Skill maintenance cited above and the recycling approach articulated here are both static academic approaches, more related to discredited 'occupying time' practices than to the kinds of principles and aims outlined in Tomlinson (1997). With specific regard to employment preparation, a consequence of this combination of lack of theoretical background in relevant learning theory, a misunderstanding of the learning capabilities of their students and a broadly care approach to education was that tutors downgraded views of the potential of students to become able to find employment. This downgrading of potential is a general feature of service provision for people with learning difficulties recognised in the literature (see especially, Rapley, 2004: 78-111). Here, as a result, there was a re-direction of course objectives away from employment preparation.

Students I work with are like, most of them have no reading and no writing and no understanding skills. Most of them don't even know my name after a year and half of teaching them, so work skills isn't appropriate because

there are so many steps before work skills. We kind of turned it into looking at work in the community. So it's a lot more sort of community access now which is the step before the thinking about work. I mean there's probably one out of 20 of them that will be able to go on to work. And most of those we've already captured and brought here so. (Cheryl's colleague, interview 38)

There is an element of the self-fulfilling prophesy here. It has been decided that 'work skills isn't appropriate' so course aims are downgraded to 'sort of community access' in the process reducing students opportunity to develop employment-relevant skills. It is little wonder that the conclusion is that 'probably one out of 20 of them' are likely to find employment. Also, the use of the word 'captured' is fascinating, suggestive of a more predatory version of the care centred 'protective custody' purpose of FE colleges expressed by others above. Sabsay and Platt (1985) describe what they term the 'well intentioned condescension' of care workers working with people with learning difficulties, and this might be considered an example of this. Giddens discusses in a wider context how institutional modes of behaviour and the values of social systems are passed on and maintained in their 'chronic reconstitution' (Giddens, 1990: 96) through the mundane practices and interactions of day to day service provision. Much of the analysis in this section might be regarded as describing how staff, perhaps acting out of what they regard as the best interests of their students, in practice pass on institutional values and norms that continue to discriminate against and debilitate those they are trying to help. Here, instead of raising the 'presumption of employability' (*Valuing Employment Now*, 2009) and developing the awareness of students of their right to social inclusion, in practice the data

suggests tutors reinforce the social values and social identities of people with learning difficulties that maintain them on the fringes of mainstream society.

Staff were suspicious of the employment focus of FE and other aspects of social policy. As a result, there was confusion and little progress towards the 'match and fit' (Tomlinson, 1997 23) of services tailored to individual student needs:

For my particular students it didn't really matter what the vocational placement was. It could be in a shop, it didn't have to be vocationally specific, it was just that experience of work that we want for the students. You know having to get up, having to make sure that they're wearing appropriate clothes, that they're clean and that they go and can follow instructions and things like that. (Andrea, interview 36)

Students had already demonstrated these abilities through their clean, well dressed and overall regular and punctual attendance at college. Work experience has an abstract form and purpose here, unconnected with specific skill or career development and choices, far removed from the individualised approach envisaged by Tomlinson (1997). It is as if simply by being in a place of work young people will somehow absorb learning experiences of value. As Chapter 4 reflected in its critique of *Valuing Employment Now* (2009) few extra resources have been made available to colleges to support young people through placements or develop services to do so. A number of tutors explained that it was left largely up to individuals to provide what support they could during placement weeks with the result that many felt alienated by and suspicious of the

employment strategy. For example, a Connexions worker described a training session she had attended put on by Remploi:

Remploi have been commissioned to work in Camden...There was an open day for professionals and its about supporting people with disabilities back into work and we went along thinking this is fantastic, our kids coming out at 19 or, you know, who don't wanna go into an educational institution after leaving at 16. This may be where we're gonna get support. It felt, when we went, that the thrust of it was getting people off incapacity benefit. (Michelle, interview 42a)

There was a sense that teaching and training staff felt undervalued and under pressure. Staff, including management and face-to-face tutors, felt alienated from, unprepared for and besieged by the demands being made of them by administrative and government systems. Interviewees felt pressured by line managers; workloads; poor resources and discriminatory treatment by funding bodies; the perceived advancement of other educational departments and the preferential treatment given to them at learning difficulties departments' expense; a national qualification structure and what was perceived as constant changes in this; outcomes-based assessment criteria; a government employment agenda; a government 'upskilling' agenda; discriminatory 'Equal Opportunities' policies; a lack of Local Government support and the parents of students with learning difficulties.

Conclusion

Section one set out the policy context of interview data analysis. In particular, it highlighted the impact of the Tomlinson Report and how that structured the underlying aims and ideology of the further education sector with regard to learning difficulties in subsequent years. Central to that ideology is the notion that colleges should include students with learning difficulties in meaningful ways. The section also discussed a later policy agenda, seeking to ensure that further education for this group includes specific learning and workplace-based experiences which prepare students for employment.

Section two brought together an analysis of time and space issues encountered by students in schools and, especially, in post-16 education to explore how time and space are configured in the specialised education sector supports students towards being included in mainstream employment. It found that how time is structured in special schools may cause students to be excluded from important educational and cultural transitions. Education time throughout the education careers of students with learning difficulties is often fractured, with multiple and random transitions and no clear aims or definite conclusions. Laing discusses, with reference to individuals with mental health problems, how experiencing time in this way, as a series of 'discrete moments', can disable the construction of life narratives and produce individuals 'whose sense of self is fractured' (Laing, 1969: 157, 194). Chapter 8 discusses this sense of self and identity and its consequences for inclusion through mainstream employment. This section ends by analysing how time combines with space in further education colleges to limit and prevent the inclusion of students with learning difficulties often even in the same physical space as students without learning difficulties.

Data presented here explored how well this compromised inclusion equips students with the inter-personal and social skills necessary to survive in mainstream employment. As Chapter 3 discussed, despite this compromised inclusion, interviews in the canteen space of FE colleges were the most relaxed, suggesting students with learning difficulties had taken at least partial ownership of these spaces, and felt empowered by them to an extent. This further suggests that, despite students having been disadvantaged by the disrupted nature of school transitions and the segregated nature of specialist schooling, even the compromised space sharing that occurs in FE has potential to begin to address past problems and provide the basis for inclusion, even moving towards the sense of belonging (Therborn, 1991) this thesis discusses in Chapter 8. This chapter has pointed to how a combination of the lack of planning for inclusion by college authorities and a self-imposed withdrawal from inclusion by students with learning difficulties – and their tutors – limits this potential. In identifying the problems lies the potential to address them.

Section three reflected on how well tutors and other employment training staff are able to use the time and space contexts available to them to prepare young people with learning difficulties for employment. It found suspicions of the objectives of employment-centred curriculum initiatives, and scepticism about the motives of the agencies enacting them at every level of the special education and training system. There was a lack of clarity amongst tutors about the aims and methods of enacting this strategy.

Systemic failure to provide appropriate training for tutors has led to poorly developed theory regarding the nature of the learning abilities and learning potential of students. A consequence of this has been confusion as to the purpose of FE colleges themselves, which represent for many working in them

another arm of a more general care service. Traditional institutional modes of behaviour, framing the identity 'prerogatives and obligations' (Giddens, 1990: 96) made available to people with learning difficulties by a special system of education, continue to dominate, passed on in a daily process of chronic reconstitution in the mundane interaction of tutor-student relationships. This continuance does not support the requirements of employment preparation outlined in the national employment agenda. The data raise serious doubts about how well the specialised system of education in general and the post-16 sector in particular prepares people with learning difficulties for employment. The evidence gathered here suggests that the educational structures of this system do not improve the employment potential of people with learning difficulties and are not currently suited to the requirements of supported employment strategies or to other government policy in this regard.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 have analysed elements of the social structures that govern access to employment for people with learning difficulties. These elements are a national, historical policy context, local voluntary sector employment support and local education and training support. Within this context, chapters 7 and 8 assess how people with learning difficulties actively contribute to and negotiate these contexts by analysing what employment means to people with learning difficulties and how a range of identities associated with having learning difficulties informs their opportunities to find paid work.

Chapter 7: Exploring what employment means to people with learning difficulties

Introduction

This chapter explores what employment means to people with learning difficulties. It builds on and adapts an analysis of what employment means to workers without learning difficulties, drawing on the work of Raymond Williams and in particular his analysis developed in *Work* (Fraser, 1968). This thesis is the first to add an analysis of what employment means to people with learning difficulties drawn expressly from their testimony, and the first to seek to develop a framework with which to interpret their perceptions of what employment means.

As Chapter 2 outlined, Williams developed an analytical framework to explore employment meanings from his analysis of employment oral histories. The framework identified the following six employment meanings:

- 'An articulation of need, a definition of co-operative means, in what is known and felt to be a common condition' (280)
- 'The process of giving human energy to a desired end' (285)
- 'Not the work itself but that by-product of doing it' (287)
- 'The gap in the meaning of work' (290)
- 'A confirmation of significance' (291)
- 'An absence of meaning...the gap between what work means and what much of it has been made to mean' (292)

(Williams in Fraser, 1968: 280-295)

In this chapter I apply these concepts to the reflections of people with learning difficulties and investigate whether the above employment meanings can be used to describe what employment means to people with learning difficulties. I also examine additional ways in which employment becomes meaningful to people with learning difficulties not addressed by the Williams framework.

In order to organise this analysis the chapter is divided into two main sections which consider the time and space contexts in which Williams' meanings framework can be applied. It investigates how participants' reflections are informed by the spatial contexts of their experiences, how their reflections and knowledge is 'spatially determined' (Brown and Durrhiem, 2009: 915). The chapter draws on Goffman's concept of 'protective custody' (1961); how specific spaces act both to protect but also dis-able the individuals they attempt to shield. The chapter discusses how this impacts upon developmental, social and employment issues and, adding a unique contribution to this literature, applies the concept of protective custody more broadly across a range of social spaces including employment space.

The chapter also draws on an analysis of time discussed at length in Chapter 2. Thompson (1967) and Bourdieu (1963) reflect on how 'entrance into the money economy' (Bourdieu, 1963: 42), or finding paid employment, helps individuals define the difference between their own time and time owned by employers, between 'lost time and well filled time' (Bourdieu, 1963: 42), socially valueless and socially valuable time. This notion of 'lost' and 'well filled time' is explored through the reflections of people with learning difficulties.

1. How spaces inform what employment means

Section one discusses the 'spatially determined knowledge' (Brown and Durrhiem, 2009: 915) of what employment means to people with learning difficulties. In order to do this the section is sub-divided into two sub-sections. The first explores how and to what extent family and other home spaces offer a sense of 'protective custody' (Goffman, 1990: 33) and how this impacts upon and informs what employment means to people with learning difficulties. The second sub-section investigates community spaces and the ways in which these inform how employment becomes meaningful.

Family and shared home spaces: 'protective custody' and community ties

The first two examples discussed below illustrate the dual nature of 'protective custody' (Goffman, 1990: 47):

I know a lot of people don't find it easy but it's something that I need to do. Because, I mean, I can't get a job. If I can't get a job then I don't know what. You see, I don't know what 'cause then I have to spend a lot of time, if I can't get job then I have to spend a lot of time at home with my Mum all the time. And you see, the thing is, I love my Mum to bits and I love my family to bits but I just need something to do, or else I'm gonna, (claps) tuh! (Ethan, interview 6)

Though clearly devoted to his family, Ethan feels time spent in home space as nothing to do, 'lost time' (Bourdieu, 1963: 42). Employment is 'something to do', an alternative to the lost time of home space. The result is exasperation and confusion expressed both in his 'I don't know what' and his final 'tuh!' The frustration with home space is rooted in Ethan's failure to find employment ('I can't get a job'). Ethan has not made his 'entrance into the money economy' (Bourdieu, 1963: 17) having not found paid employment. Yet he has become aware of the differences between 'lost' and 'well filled' time causing him to reinterpret his home space in terms of 'lost time' (Bourdieu, 1963: 42). His lack of employment results in ambiguous meanings being ascribed to home space, which he both values highly and regards as 'lost time'. Employment space becomes in this sense an imagined escape to 'well filled' time and the potential to confirm his significance, to beginning to explore 'the process of being oneself and alive' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 291). Employment is perceived as a means of exploring his potential beyond the confines of the 'protective custody' of family, an expression of the developing self.

The second example illustrates how entrance into the money economy at an imagined level, brings conflict into the protective custody relationships of home space:

Salvador: My great Gran would like me to work in a hospital. I'm not really sure what she would like me to be doing but you know that she would like me to work in a hospital.

Question: What about you?

S: I really love computers. I think I would like a office work or a secretary.

(Salvador, interview 24)

Salvador is expressing choice, developing a sense of self as an adolescent in the process of approaching employment. The example illustrates the 'moment of truth' (Goffman, 1990: 47) of transition from home to employment space. The moment of truth in the first instance lies in his decision either to accept family advice or pursue his own wants and needs, a decision of whether or not to at least partially break free of the protective custody of family. Employment meaning is found in the 'by-product' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 287) of establishing his independence, the journey towards which is signalled in the interview simply by expressing views contrary to the protective family. Salvador is not overly concerned with the precise nature of future employment, only, at this point, with the opportunity it affords him to express his own views, to begin to explore who he is and wants to be. This extends the interpretation of the 'by product' notion developed by Williams, who used it as a way of expressing how, for many, wages become the sole meaning of work. As he goes on to argue however, the 'reduction of meaning of work to money' is always ambiguous (287). Salvador's comments add substance to Williams' argument, showing that the payment of the employment he imagines comes at a personal level in the form of exploring who he might become.

The final example reflects upon some consequences of the coming together of employment and family space. Julie, a young girl with a Chinese cultural background, describes working in her parents' shop:

Question: Have you had a job?

Julie: No.

Q: Do Mum and Dad ask you to help out in the shop?

J: Yeah. Yeah, sometimes help my Mum and my Dad.

Q: What do you do?

J: Er, I help my Mum, cleaning, yeah.

Q: You don't serve the customers?

J: Yeah!

(Julie, interview 10)

Julie responds to the question about serving customers with an emphatic yes, suggesting that this is simply part of normal behaviour in shop life. For Julie the home space has become the employment space where employment is simply helping the family. Her labour is closely interwoven into the normal workings of family life and she is unable to consider the work she does as work. Employment and home life lack separation in time and space, undermining the sense of difference essential to an understanding of meaning (Giddens, 1991: 16 and: 43). Julie imagines no separate employment space and therefore has a less well developed idea of the potential of employment to impact upon personal development than the previous two participants. Julie understands employment 'in its most general sense...the process of giving human energy to a desired end' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 285), that being the continued functioning of the family unit. In this example, an unimaginable employment separate from the family provides no means of supporting the developing self.

Living accommodation away from a family home, in supported living or group hostels, consistently changed for 13 of the 37 participants with learning difficulties. For example:

In a children's home since age 12 till 18, was 12 to 18, 16 or something, anyway, 12 to 16, and then from there to Cricklewood and then from Cricklewood to Harlesdon and then from Harlesdon to ha, ha, oh God! Kings Cross then from Kings Cross to Camden Street, no Camden Street and then Kings Cross. And then from there I went to loads, I went Gloucester Avenue as well actually. As well. So I been quite a lot of places. (Amy, interview 29)

The serial transition nature of home space contrasts starkly with Amy's consistent employment record. Amy had been at her employment for 22 years when interviewed, having been one of those placed in Local Authority employment during the 1980s as discussed in Chapter 5. In a sense, employment may have taken on a 'protective custody' role, encapsulated in Amy's phrase 'they're good to me and I'm good to them, in a way'. The Council employment – in a Day Centre – here performs the function families often serve, shielding vulnerable individuals from social critiques (Goffman 1990: 33). For Amy it has offered stability, a 'common condition' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 280) of employment shared with – largely – supportive colleagues.

Sharing home spaces with relative strangers, often with what was perceived as inadequate social support, was a common experience:

We used to have staff at night but we don't have the staff on there at night now, because it's all the cut backs, I think it's to do with the cut backs. We just have staff during the day, they stay there till about four, half past four to five. At night we have got an emergency phone but I want to go where there's staff on at night, I feel safer. (Margaret, interview 32)

Margaret is actively seeking the protective custody she expects from a Local Authority care service, a safe and supportive space. In Chapter 5 Margaret reflected on the sense of community she found in the ATC at Greenwood Centre, which presented over the course of three interviews with her as her fondest memory. The collective nature of that employment space and experience took the place, for a short period as she recalls it in present time, of the absent supportive family space. The 'common condition' of that specific employment phase for Margaret contrasts starkly with other employment experiences, as Chapter 8 discusses in more detail.

Two themes emerge from the discussion of family and home space above. The first is that employment is perceived by a number of participants as an opportunity to develop the self. This is the case – with Ethan and Salvador – even in the process of imagining a future employment. The second theme to emerge is that a number of participants found a sense of protective custody from at least phases of employment in the 'common condition' of employment, when family or home life failed to provide this. Below I explore spaces outside of the home, in the community, looking particularly at mutually beneficial employment roles and their impact on how employment becomes meaningful.

Community space and employment meaning

As Chapter 5 showed, specific support communities for people with learning difficulties evolved in the years following World War Two. As that Chapter shows and as discussed above, in Camden part of this support included sheltered employment and employment training. Employment space was at the centre of the specialist provision developed by the Camden Society from the 1980s onwards. As discussed there, this offered a limited version of integration into the local community, a specialised community seeking to filter 'belittling definitions' of learning-disabled identities reaching its service users whilst providing 'broad access' to elements of a wider society (Goffman 1990: 33). Many of the services, including the employment services acted in this way, as an extended form of protective custody. This sub-section investigates other community spaces of employment support, developed outside of the specialist learning difficulty voluntary sector and particularly at how mutually beneficial employment relationships inform how employment becomes meaningful.

The literature highlights the fact that in the United States 'Culturally and educationally, the United States specializes in the production of kinds of persons described first by their ethnic, racial and linguistic groups and second by the supposed mental abilities. Overlaps between the two systems of classification are frequent, systematically haphazard and often deleterious' (McDermot and Goldman 2003:1; see also Gelb 1986). This is also a feature of the UK experience of learning difficulties. As Appendix 4 shows, 20 out of the 27 students interviewed had Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Though the cultural mix of the Borough of Camden is very rich, with over 50 percent of the Borough's population from non-UK cultural backgrounds, the number of

people with learning difficulties from BME backgrounds is disproportionate unless part of what is being captured in intelligence tests is in fact non-indigenous cultural backgrounds.

A number of participants related having experienced the rich cultural mix of north London in positive and personally supportive ways. For example:

I grew up with all kinds of different people as well. I grew up with Irish family, Greek family, erm I grew up with a lot of Black families, as neighbours and friends. I grew up with all kinds of different people 'cause they were there for me and the thing was I've always enjoyed that you see. (Ethan, interview 6)

As described above, though Ethan had been unable to find employment through his cultural and community relationships, he had found support in terms of his own self-worth and identity choices. Conversely, other cultural minority communities were able to directly provide employment. In Julie's case described above, the family, cultural and employment spaces were identical. In the following example the relationships – and what employment means – are more complex:

Jane: On a Sunday morning I help in a library from ten to quarter to one...I help Alan's uncle. I do the same thing, tidy the shelf, check that they've got any tickets in. The man who was before, Ronny Marx, his name was Ronny Marx, did all the tickets messed up. Still some more but

I'm fast and Alan's uncle, he writes the tickets out, cause he's in charge of that and he's giving me more tickets to put in the books so they're alright...[It is] Woodside Park Synagogue library...I help in the children's library. It's a nice, a library, from ten to quarter to one. And the lady's called Mrs Cohen, in charge, there was a man called Andrew who was in charge, not in charge, in charge of the classes and now he left to do something else and it's Mrs Cohen. She's nice. And they're gonna have a, they may have a library on Sunday, next Sunday but erm they're also gonna have a Purim party. The children all dress up, and the teachers. I have to go 'cause I'm gonna help in the class. (Jane, interview 11)

This example of employment in community space is rich in meanings. At its core is the development of a mutually beneficial relationship between Jane and her cultural community. As discussed above, there are broad-based 'by-product' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 287) aspects to the meanings drawn, both in the sense of Jane's perceptions of her growing value to the community and in a future she describes in the line 'I'm gonna help in the class'. In interview, Jane describes a long employment career built of numerous short periods of full time employment, the favourite phase of which was working in a nursery. Helping in the class is a potential return to her favoured type of employment, her work in the library part of a wider investment in community with this as reward. Jane clearly perceives the work as a 'confirmation of significance' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 291) using the description of her ability to address what Rose calls the 'brute facts of work' (Rose 1999) – sorting out the tickets mess – as a means of illustrating her employment skills and value. In this, voluntary and unpaid employment, her value is measured not by the time-money relationships discussed elsewhere in this

chapter, but by the acknowledgement by others and most likely to herself, of her contributions to her cultural community.

This research found numerous examples of a desire for mutuality, often expressed as finding employment in community or public space, for example local cafes and shops. Thirteen out of 27 student participants listed working in a shop or café they knew local to them as desirable employment. For example:

I could help the customers and show them around if they stuck and I can help them look for things to look at they wanna buy. (Davita, interview 5)

This can be considered an example of the desire for relational mutuality, the need to be considered of value on the basis of what an individual can give to a collective experience, a search for 'confirmation of significance' through helping the public, through giving rather than receiving a service. This desire was expressed by others in more contradictory ways:

Dunno, selling at the café and helping the customers. So sometimes they could be a bit harsh and rude sometimes. 'Cause you get public people coming in and they're like, oh, all rushing you. It's like what's the problem, yeah? (David, interview 4)

Here, though experience has undermined David's attempts to confirm his significance, the desire to be socially useful is still there. Employment provides

David with an opportunity to prove his social worth – to himself as well as others – by helping or serving others.

The three examples above illustrate employment becoming meaningful through the mutually beneficial relationships people with learning difficulties are able to or imagine they may be able to develop through employment. Rose (1999) and Williams (1968) both discuss the relational significance of employment. From his analysis of workers without learning difficulties, Williams points to the 'set of social relationships which in experience are quite inextricable from the work' (292) which combine with work tasks to contextualise what employment comes to mean. The examples above indicate that for people with learning difficulties also this combination – here in their relationships with communities – is important to how they understand what employment can and does mean.

My research provides examples of 'geographically bounded' (Snell, 2006: 34) communities supporting those with more long term roots in them. There were two notable examples of local contacts providing local employment for people with learning difficulties, both involving older participants whose employment in local workplaces had begun during the 1950s and 1960s. Reg's experience has already been discussed in Chapter 5. After finding employment in Camden post war, Reg was found work at Euston Train station by family friends already employed there, a job he stayed in until retirement. In this instance, British Rail functioned as one of the 'ties of community' (Rose, 1999: 62) finding work for one of its own in an area of London – Camden and especially Kentish Town – where railways had been the major source of employment since the 1850s (Tindall, 2005: 164). Other smaller local employers also played this role:

Question: Was your factory a big local employer?

Len: Yes, it was yeah.

Q: How many people worked there?

L: Might have been about hundred people I think, roughly. Manager was there 51 years. Must have been working there age 14. He got a television out of 'em.

Q: And your school was a special school?

L: Yeah.

Q: What was it called?

L: (Inaudible) Harmood Street, just off of Chalk Farm. I think it's changed now, think its Chalcot now.

Q: So did any other kids from your school get jobs there?

L: Think there was yeah.

Q: Did you know them in the factory?

L: They didn't stay there long though.

Q: Did you make good friends at work?

L: Er, made a few, not that many.

(Len, interview 31)

Len's place of employment was originally situated in south Camden, just north of Euston Road in an area called Somerstown dominated by large working class estates bordered by Euston, Kings Cross and St Pancras railway stations to the south and the old St Pancras workhouse, still standing as a hospital, to the east. This was the area from which, according to Len, his employers, Connelly Brothers, largely drew their workforce and in which Len previously lived with his

parents and still lived when interviewed. As well as this, there is a suggestion, in the fact that a number of young people from Len's special school probably worked there, that an employment relationship had been nurtured between the factory and the local special school. There are other historical examples of relationships consciously being developed between local employers and schools (Humber, MA unpublished thesis, 1999). Here, data supports the idea that one employment meaning for school leavers in the Somerstown area generally was a future career at Connelly's, and that this meaning extended to Len's special school. As such, Connelly's may be considered as acting as one of the 'ties of community' (Rose, 1999: 62) and one that historically worked to include young people with learning difficulties. In this sense, the 'common condition' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 280) of employment extends beyond employment space into the local community. Employment for Len in Connelly's is not only inclusion in a mainstream workplace but also inclusion in and by the community at the level of the acceptance of the idea that young people with learning difficulties from the local area should be included in the mainstream employment of that area.

The relationship between employer and employee, and the 'confirmation of significance' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 291) it infers is reflected in the response to the question about the size of the factory, with the double confirmation that it was a big employer ('Yes it was, yeah'), the estimation of the, relatively, large number of workers there and the unsolicited offering of the 51 year career of his supervisor. Len expresses pride in the fact that he worked for such a large and long-established company. For Len, his 34 year career at a major local employer is both a confirmation of his social value, and of his own self worth.

However, Len's 'ties' to his employer are ambivalent. The line 'he got a television out of 'em' suggests a 'they' in whom Len identifies a group with interests

different to, in this case, Len and his supervisor. There is an 'absence of meaning' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 292) expressed, a distancing from both the institution and relationships of employment space. Williams argues as an employee Len (and for Williams the majority of employees) has been distanced 'from the source of the decisions about what work is to be done and how it is to be done' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 293) in the very process of being employed. He is both empowered to do work, and dis-empowered in that he has no control over the overall work process. An important employment meaning Len expresses here is what Williams would call an alienation from work, a meaning expressed by a number of participants without learning difficulties analysed by Williams.

Relationships made in work are also presented by Len in vague and ambivalent ways. He is not sure whether others from his school worked there, thinks they probably didn't stop long if they did and, more generally, made 'not that many' friends. The time Len spent in employment space is remembered while relationships are vague. Employment time has a concrete money value expression but relationships are blurred, raising questions of the quality of Len's inclusion in employment space. This is discussed with reference to Len's employment identity in Chapter 8.

Frequent transition, from area to area, community to community, undermined the potential for community space to support employment opportunities. For example, Megan attended school in Streatham where her mother lived, lived in Paddington herself while attending college in Kings Cross; Susan went to school in Bradford then Edmonton, north London, lived in Islington and attended college in Kings Cross; Elsie was raised in Newcastle, moved to north London late in life to live with her sister on the death of her mother, attended college in Islington. For these participants the results of this were a largely inconsistent and

superficial engagement both with employment and with a wider sense of 'geographically bounded' community.

My research also found examples of people with learning difficulties being rejected from community space. For example:

I got away from estate 'cause one boy gobbed all over me, sick all over me, I hope he's, I shouldn't wish him dead cause the thing, like on the estate, people knew what this boy had done to me, one boy when I was young about fourteen, thirteen, he gobbed all over me, spat down me and was sick. In some ways I wish he is dead. I shouldn't say it really. (David, interview 4)

A central aspect of this extract is how David generalises his anger and disappointment to his estate as a whole in the line, 'people knew what this boy had done to me'. By the fact that they knew and did nothing, his rejection is by and from the group, not just by the one bullying individual. The bullying act of one is generalised into the rejection by the group. High percentages of people with learning difficulties are victims of bullying. A 1999 survey found that 88 percent of adults were victims of some form of bullying – ranging from name calling to being beaten up (MENCAP, 1999). Of this group, 23 percent were physically assaulted while 66 percent said they'd been bullied regularly (more than once a month). Bullying can contribute to mental health problems, especially in the young (McCulloch, 2003) while its prevalence contributes to people with learning difficulties being regarded as 'second class citizens' (Community Care, 1999). The threat of bullying hangs over the heads of people with learning difficulties,

informing the identity options available to them. My research found a number of examples of rejection and mild bullying in the workplace and this is discussed more fully in Chapter 8.

Section 1 has looked at 'spatially determined knowledge' (Brown and Durrhiem, 2009: 915) and how this informs what employment comes to mean for people with learning difficulties in family, home and community spaces. It has shown that the ways in which workers without learning difficulties conceptualise what employment means as interpreted by Williams are similar to how people with learning difficulties draw meaning from employment. In some cases, this is true even before people have worked which suggests that what employment means and potentially means is readily available knowledge, learnt or discerned by people with learning difficulties even in the absence of employment. People with learning difficulties are to a degree included in the common, social knowledge about what employment means. This provides some support to the idea that employment has the potential to be a vehicle for social inclusion.

2. Pride and shame: The structuring and morality of employment time

This section analyses how time contextualises employment meanings. It discusses the importance of wages, their link with time and meaningful employment. The section looks at how employment structures time – imagined future time, experienced time and life narrative. It also discusses a recurrent participant theme, how employment time offers employees with learning difficulties an opportunity to prove their social – and moral – value. It begins with

an analysis of testimony from two ex residents of St Lawrence's long stay hospital who worked whilst there.

I was at St Lawrence's since the age of five, and I didn't leave 'till the age of 35. Mum didn't like the way I was treated. She got me out after that. I didn't mind helping wash patients or helping to feed them but washing floors, no way. That's the last straw. You had to work whether you wanted to or not because otherwise you'd lose everything, no pleasures, nothing...That's if you were 'in disgrace'...they would say, 'Oh, she should be in G3'. That's punishment ward that is. (Marion, interview 56)

Celia: I used to be in St Lawrence's and they closed it up...I even used to do the cleaning. I used to do the stairs and something else...the toilets. The shit was awful...

Question: Did you get paid for your work at St Lawrence's?

C: You know, in the corridor. You see you get your book, you get money there. If you play up, they stop it...If you play up you go in the pads.

(Celia, interview 57)

Both of these participants were what the Wood Committee (1929) would have considered 'high grade' inmates capable of working (see Chapter 2) and as such essential to the running of the institution. The key, interrelating themes that emerge from these accounts of work experiences are payment for work done, and work discipline through physical punishment and moral judgement. Sheena

Rolph discusses this idea of moral atonement through work in her unpublished thesis (1999). One method of payment is through the granting of 'pleasures' – for example, being allowed to go to one of the institution's dances, having extra food or trips out. As reflected above and elsewhere in the learning difficulties literature (Abraham et al, 2010: 95-96) payment at St Lawrence's was also made in the form of tokens. A system of credit for working well, that is, not for performing specific tasks but for behaviour during tasks and at other times, is evident. Credits were recorded in 'your book' and could be cashed 'in the corridor' and used, at some institutions, at shops or cafes inside the hospital. Equally, they could be taken away for 'bad' behaviour. Another participant, who visited her son during his stay at Harperbury Hospital in Hertfordshire, spoke of residents begging from visitors in order to be able to buy food from the visitors' café after work for residents (and subsequently the opportunity to build up credits) was stopped (Dianne, interview 54).

Physical punishment for refusing to work was imprisonment in 'the pads' or 'G3', the 'punishment ward'. There is also a suspicion that types of work could be a form of punishment, or was at least considered as such by the residents, for example cleaning the toilets or washing the floors as remembered and related above. Perhaps a more global technology of discipline (Foucault 1991) acting not primarily on the body as with imprisonment but on the mind, is the deep-rooted morality of 'in disgrace'. The formulation used above is an echo from the very beginnings of segregated provision for people with learning difficulties. Research shows that it was used in the Sandlebridge Colony, Cheshire opened by Mary Denby in the 1880s (Jackson, 2000: 186). That it continued to be used as a form of behaviour discipline through into at least the 1980s reflects its ideological usefulness as part of long-stay institutional culture over time. The fear of being declared 'in disgrace' or morally unfit acts as a discipline to work. By inference,

those 'in grace' or morally fit were those residents who worked to standards required without complaint. Specifically, work at long-stay institutions was an opportunity for residents to show their moral value.

Centrally, as work was rewarded with the promise of 'joy and play' (Adams, 2002: 18), as cash payment was made on the basis of rewarded behaviours not the fulfilment of tasks in specific time frames, as work was enforced by 'fear and pain' (Adams, 2002: 18), work time, in long-stay institutions, had not attained the 'decontextualised' exchange value (Adams, 2002: 18) of work time in mainstream society. As such, residents had not made their 'entrance into the money economy' and subsequently were less or unaware of differences between 'lost', or 'well filled' time (Bourdieu, 1963: 17). In the absence of payment for time 'spent' (Thompson, 1967: 61), distinctions between employers time and 'own time' (Thompson, 1967: 61) were blurred. Money/moral 'credit' might be amassed but could also be arbitrarily taken away. In this sense, the idea of progress or future time becomes meaningless:

See, I tell you that place was like a mad house. I wouldn't say prison because at least when you're in there you know when your time's up.
(Marion, interview 56)

What of employment outside of the institutions? Though a majority of those interviewed had employment experience, only 6 of these were in or had previously had, long term full time employment, reflecting the 6.5 percent of people with learning difficulties in employment in the UK generally (Social Care and Mental Health indicators, National Indicator Set: 2009-2010). As above, very

few participants had made the 'entrance into the money economy' (Bourdieu, 1963: 42). The rest of this section analyses the meanings people with learning difficulties constructed from their limited, often fragmentary time in employment. It begins with two contrasting conceptualisations of how employment acts to structure time:

Work means er, getting a job and working in it and getting paid at the end, or 9 to 5 work. (Paul, interview 23)

Question: Would you want full time or part time work?

L: Full time really.

Q: How many hours would that be?

L: 9 till 4, something. I don't want 9 till 5 it's...

Q: Why's that?

L: Mmm, 'cause I'm finished by, I'm knackered by four.

(Larry, interview 16)

Though more clearly expressed by Larry, both participants understand employment as both a claim on daily time and on an embodied physicality. This is despite the fact that neither had had full time, nine to five employment. For Paul, the straightforward 'by-product' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 287) of employment is 'getting paid'. However, another 'by-product' is how employment structures time. The structural and structuring nature of employment is clearly described in the three elements of what work means: finding a job, working at it

and getting paid for it. Here, time has taken on its decontextualised nature, the transition of time into money values (Thompson, 1967: 61) completely conceptualised by the participant, despite his lack of practical experience. Employment, even in its absence, has meaning not only as a result of the payment attached to it – though that is a central element as others have long argued (see especially O'Connor and Tizard, 1956) – but also due to the way it adds structure to life, providing a clear demarcation between the time employers own and the participants 'own time'.

This is less clearly understood by Larry, as a teenager the younger of the two, interviewed whilst attending an employment support agency. The connections between time and money, own and owned time and the structuring nature of employment are less clearly articulated. Asked why he would like to work Larry replied, 'Earning a bit of money, not that I need it, but earning a bit of money.' Larry has not made the 'entrance' into the money economy, disabling him from conceptualising his life in any wider terms than his own physical needs and abilities, from understanding society in its wider, structural and structuring terms. The participant does not understand employment as a 'common condition', as a provider of 'by-product' or as a way of confirming his own 'significance', to others or, importantly, to himself. Employment has not and does not add to his construction of life narrative, which is subsequently fragmented, experienced as a series of 'discrete moments' (Laing 1969: 157, 194). As Chapter 6 showed, discussing Larry's school life, by the time he came to interview, aged 18, Larry had been through seven different schools and college courses each with their processes of transition, socialisation, peer development and personal readjustment. This fracturing of social space and time now presents employment as a relatively meaningless concept, a way of occupying time in which the need for cash payment is absent.

Chapter 4 discussed how policy regarded specialised employment opportunities developed post World War Two, summed up in the stated aims of Camden's sheltered employment centre which was to 'enable disabled people...to be given the chance to prove themselves' (LBCLHA: Welfare Committee, 21/1/1965). Policy regarded employment as a way in which all disabled people could show their value. This policy aim is reflected in the meanings of employment constructed by participants:

To get some money and to get, to be busy, not to stay home. Not to sit at home. (Jane, interview 11)

I like it, give you thing to do. Get to like, you get up, go to work, be peaceful at work, yeah. And then work really hard. Then you go home. (James, interview 13)

Employment structuring time is clearly perceived as an employment meaning. Central to Jane's employment meanings is money value of employment time. There is an awareness of lost time away from employment in her 'get to be busy' formulation and James' 'give you thing to do' and the structuring nature of employment are clearly understood in his 'get up, go to work' formulation. For Jane, being busy contrasts starkly with staying at home, which she presents as 'lost' time. There is a suggestion of loneliness in the bleak 'Not to sit at home'. However, despite the bleakness of sitting at home, the participant insists that employment means being paid for your time, that not to be devalues her time, making employment meaningless. For Jane, the loneliness of home may be

preferable to meaningless – unpaid – work though, as this chapter discusses above, Jane finds ways of embedding meaning into unpaid, mutually beneficial work in her community.

Doing something and being busy are preferred states not provided by 'own time'. This is particularly interesting in the case of James who during his interview outlined an extremely busy 'own time' schedule, with voluntary work, football training and social clubs filling this time. Despite this James perceives employment as the time which will give him 'thing to do'. At the core of James' testimony is an awareness of the moral potential of employment. His formulation, 'be peaceful at work...and then work really hard' is key. He insists – to potential employers, to the interviewer, to himself – that through hard work he will find peace, be morally of value to society. James' testimony, added to that above from Marion and Celia, suggests the moral element of employment is felt keenly by people with learning difficulties. Employment as moral validation is not discussed by Williams. There are numerous possibilities why this might be the case – the author may not have detected it, he may have felt it unimportant, or it may not have been a meaning of employment articulated by the workers without learning difficulties he analysed. If this latter is the case, then moral validation is an employment meaning specific to people with learning difficulties, raising further questions as to why this might be the case and how this might inform employment's potential to support social inclusion.

This chapter concludes with an analysis of testimonies from those participants who experienced relatively long periods of employment. Similar themes arise from this analysis. Participants illustrate the structuring nature of employment, reflect on aspects of its moral value, and describe how employment informs life narratives generally.

Question: What does work mean to you Len?

Len: S'pose it means getting money, pay the bills.

Q: Did you have a long working career?

L: I work in leather factory for 33, 30, just under 34 years.

Q: Whereabouts?

L: Erm, it was down Chalton Street for about 17, 18 years, then it went to Colliers Wood, then they moved to Ashford after that.

(Len, interview 31)

I been at my job for 22 years, right, and er, I'm a kitchen assistant. I do the tables, wash tables down, help do the food. They put the dinner on to a tray and put the tray where the tables are. (Amy, interview 29)

Cath: Erm, I had a job in a shop, I studied shop retail. I got an NVQ.

Question: Where was that?

C: Shop in Holloway Road, near abouts to the Odeon. Bedfords.

Q: What sorts of things did you sell?

C: Erm, vases, different things.

Q: About how long were you there for?

C: Six years.

(Cath, interview 3)

Chapter 6 reflected on students' inability to recall accurately how long they had been at college. Here, participants, in contrast to accounts of education histories, are able to make more exact statements involving time spent at work. The previous chapter discussed possible causes of this lack of time knowledge, which included the idea that college represented little sense of progress. The employment described here might also be considered to lack a sense of progress. Amy has done basically the same job, with largely the same set of skills for 22 years. Len worked in the same warehouse position, loading and unloading rolls of leather for nearly 34 years. Yet time spent is clearly significant to employees. Participants have made their 'entrance into the money economy', have a sense of the difference between own time and owned time, have become aware of the value of their time in the very concrete way in that they were regularly paid for it. Employment time has been valuable, in its cash expression and in its structuring nature. There is a sense of pride in each participant's ability to remember with accuracy. For Len and Amy, this pride is strengthened by the longevity of their employment. Len stresses his value through repetition – '33, 30 just under 34', three 30s in one sentence. Amy takes assertive control of her employment years; 'been at my job 22 years, right'.

This pride is an element of the moral value of employment felt by Len and Amy, with employment confirming their moral worth. Cath's meaning constructions are more subtle than this. Describing her work in the shop Cath recalls only 'vases, different things' when asked what she sold for six years, suggesting a disinterest at the time or a reluctance to recall work details during interview. Cath was dismissed from the shop because she 'wasn't on time' (Cath, interview 3). Here, employment is both a 'confirmation of significance' – she had a job for six years – and potentially a source of shame, a diminution of her moral value. Subsequently, work details, like what she sold, are downgraded to of secondary

importance, even insignificance. Cath's emphasises that 'I studied shop retail. I got an NVQ'. In this way, Cath constructs a 'by-product' meaning (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 287) for employment, the general qualifications she gained being more important than the day to day process of employment itself. The moral value of her employment time is compromised by the fact that she was dismissed, so she works hard to reconstruct employment meanings so that their main focus lies in academic accreditation, in an attempt to reinstate her moral value.

This section concludes by examining the idea that employment shapes our identities and our sense of self. The idea is summed up in the phrase 'we are what we do', used in *Valuing Employment Now* (2009: 23). In a long interview, rich in detail and vivid interpretations of what employment means, Anna describes the 'brute facts' of her employment that structure and give meaning to her working day and life narrative more generally:

I do all different things. I work in the children's library I do all the baby bad books, put them, you can put them in any order, er, ABC books... all these other picture books... books for young, er, for children from 7 onwards... history books...country books erm, hobby books, like for hobbies, er like the poetry books...There's books about body books for children, there's animal books, there's art books, there's nature books, there's er, puzzle books, books all about pets. There's also pop books for younger children, there's tell books...I got to put all these numbers of the books in the right order and if you haven't got something there you put it in front or behind and erm. There is key stage books for children, and, er, there's also there's science book, religion books and all that kind of thing

in the children's library. They've got a DVD's there, they've got parents books they've got talking books, and all that, videos and all that kind of thing in the children's library...I do that till lunchtime, in the afternoon I work in the work room I'm on a computer. From last year I was learning on the computer and I do er, photocopying erm, I do erm briefings, I put people's magazines or their payslips into their boxes and I put in erm, and I do all their shredding. (Anna, interview 28)

Anna draws great pride from describing how she helps her community by ordering their reading materials, helping them to educate their children. In the afternoon she provides essential support for her colleagues. This includes ensuring 'people's magazines or their payslips' are delivered, tasks bridging the colleague/friendship divide, testimony of how well she is trusted and valued. Organising and performing the tasks confirms her significance at work. Organising and recounting them in interview confirms her significance both at work and as an individual. In the account of how she consciously organises the 'brute facts' of work Anna develops 'by-product' meanings of employment, the key one being that how she deals with them expresses and confirms who she is an individual – organised, time aware, responsible and of moral – and social – value. The 'brute facts' of employment combined with her relationships with community and colleagues provide the scaffold around which her identity evolves. This relationship, between employment and identities, and its influence on how employment can become a vehicle for social inclusion is the subject of Chapter 8.

Conclusion

Section one, 'How space informs how employment becomes meaningful', investigated how specific social spaces – home space, community and community employment space – provide contexts for how individuals come to perceive and construct what employment means. Three key themes emerged from this analysis. The first was that employment is perceived by many participants as a means to develop the self. This was the case even in the absence of actual employment, in the process of imagining a future employment. This hints at the potential of employment to support social inclusion, in the perception of it as a way 'of being oneself and alive' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 291). It is however, important to note the warning articulated by Ethan, that a continued absence of actual employment may undermine this.

The second theme discussed in section one is that, for some, employment has the potential to provide the 'protective custody' many of the participants seek. This is especially the case when family and home space fails to provide this. Here, employment space – and the relationships included in it – is perceived as having the potential to include and protect.

The third theme discussed was that of the concept of mutually beneficial relationships by which employment has the potential to provide a means of equal exchange between individuals with learning difficulties and their communities. In the examples discussed, people with learning difficulties felt valued for their contributions to communities (or perceived the potential for this validation through employment) and found personal reward, in an on-going process of giving and receiving. Giddens' theory of structuration has relevance in this case, with its

analysis of the 'mutual dependence' (1990: 235) between agency and structure, here between workers with learning difficulties and employment. Through the active agency of people with learning difficulties being employed structuration suggests they can begin to shape the institutions of employment, employment spaces, relationships and contexts and through this bi-directional process construct meaning.

Section two, 'Pride and shame: the structuring and morality of employment time' builds on an analysis of time developed in the writings of Bourdieu (1963) Thompson (1967) and Adams (2002) and added to by a specific learning difficulty literature (see Tilley and Graham, 2010) described at length in Chapter 2. This analysis argues that being paid for your time infers transitional social and intellectual processes basic to human development in a capitalist mode of production. The second section of the chapter explored this in the context of the employment experiences of people with learning difficulties. How employment is perceived to add moral value to people with learning difficulties was discussed, as was how employment structures time and life narratives.

My data suggests that people with learning difficulties show an awareness of the 'common condition' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 280) of employment, even in the absence of a job, even when imagining in what ways employment would add meaning to their lives. In this sense, they draw from a 'universe of meaning, and of a particular way of constructing meaning' (Therborn 1991: 183) which in many ways they share with people without learning difficulties. Employment is seen as a means of transformation, of structuring and giving value and meaning to lives. The data supports the idea that, in the 'common condition' of labour, employment has the potential to include people with learning difficulties not just in the activities and places of work but also, in the broader sense that employment adds

meaning to lives, in society and cultures generally, that employment has the potential to support social and cultural belonging.

However, my research found potentially contradictory tendencies to this potential. There is evidence that people with learning difficulties perceive employment as a means of developing moral value, as a way of atoning for a lack of moral value they perceive in themselves. This moral element of how employment becomes meaningful was not found by Williams. It is specific to the identities of the participants discussed here and of many of those participants analysed below in Chapter 8. It has been argued that policy aimed at increasing the number of people with learning difficulties in employment may in practice add to a sense of low moral value (Grover and Piggott, 2005). These authors point out that the creation of what they term 'market workfare' (706) has contributed to a 'media and political discourse that constructs many disabled people as being feckless and workshy' (Grover and Piggott, 2005: 707). The authors argue that during the course of successive administrations between 1997 and 2005 'increasingly stringent criteria' (706) have been developed, making it more difficult to access state benefits and seeking to pressurise people with learning difficulties to 'prepare for work or training, or stay in contact with the labour market (Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 2002: 27 cited in Grover and Piggott, 2005: 707). A combination of the historic social construction of identities associated with people with learning difficulties, as discussed in section two above and in Chapter 2 at length, and modern day policy agendas continue to shape how people with learning difficulties are perceived and, importantly, perceive themselves. The implications of this for employment's potential to support social inclusion are discussed in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8: Employment, inclusion and negotiating identities

Introduction

This chapter has two broad aims: The first is to capture and assess how people with learning difficulties negotiate their identities in employment contexts through the active management of self. The second aim is to assess the influence on identity negotiation of culturally constructed identity 'typification' (Giddens, 1990: 117-118;) associated with learning difficulties. It is argued that these identity types are carried in and developed by professional attitudes and 'naturalised' common sense notions (Goodley and Rapley, 2001: 230) of what it means to have a learning difficulty developed 'on the basis of some definite social criterion or criteria' (Giddens, 1990: 118) such as the World Health Organisation criteria discussed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 7 concluded by pointing to the potential of employment to provide space and time contexts capable of supporting belonging and concluded by drawing on Therborn's idea of a culturally determined 'universe of meaning' (1991: 183). This chapter continues to draw on these ideas; in particular it investigates the ways in which 'structural location' (Therborn 1991: 188) informs identity choices, how belonging to specific cultures – at macro and micro levels – shapes ways of interpreting situations and at how belonging infers a 'shared identity with some people and a shared differentiation with others' (1991: 183). Therborn argues that humans act the way they do because they belong to different cultures, because they are differently located in social structures, [for example as service providers and service users] or 'because of an interaction of cultural belonging and structural location' (Therborn, 1991: 182).

The chapter is in two sections. The first – *Negotiating normalcy: identities and inclusion* – analyses the testimony of people with learning difficulties not in employment. It analyses how individuals become aware of and/or seek to use identities associated with having a learning difficulty. It looks at the kinds of employment identities participants imagine for themselves and how this expresses a desire for social inclusion. It also explores how identities have been challenged and considers how a failure to become employed perpetuates them. The second section – *Employment, inclusion and identities* – looks at the experiences of those in work or who have been in work and considers whether employment means the development of new identities and what are the consequences of the answer in terms of belonging.

1. Negotiating normalcy: identities and inclusion

My research found many examples of people with learning difficulties who interpreted their own identities with reference to what Therborn expresses as a 'supra-individual' identity type (1991: 182). In this case, this type is the culturally constructed identity associated with having learning difficulties. In the first example the participant draws on it to negotiate his identity during interview:

David: Aah, I can't do this.

Question: Can't do what? This? Well let me explain what I want to do...

D: I wanted a teacher to come in.

Question: Well let's see how we get on David and then if it's just too nerve-wracking for you then we'll get the teacher in. OK?

D: Huuh (sighs)

(David, interview 4)

During his first interview the participant was hesitant. Throughout David's interview there are references to the support the participant thought he might need from his 'teacher'. During the second interview David talked at length about his family and boarding school, and reflected about his own situation and that of others in light of his life experiences. Here, his reference to learning difficulties identities was conscious and explicit:

D: Do I look special needs?

Question: Course you don't, no.

D: That's why people don't look after me, I think.

Question: What, because you don't look like special needs?

D: Yeah, sometimes. They think, oh, David don't need help. Yeah. People treat me like I don't need help sometimes.

(David, interview 4)

Here 'learning difficulties' includes identities in which David seeks sanctuary. This request to be treated more like a person who needs help puts into perspective his performance during the first interview. In the second interview, he makes a

specific request to be considered 'special needs', in particular when it is made clear that the interviewer does not regard him as a 'special needs' type. In light of the second interview the first looks more like a conscious attempt to present a dependent identity type – in an unfamiliar interview situation – in order to negotiate the possibility of support from the interviewer, a management of self referencing culturally constructed identity characteristics associated with having a learning difficulty. In this sense, David is seeking the protective custody of the identity itself, using it to find the support and protection he feels he needs.

The second example illustrates a process of identity negotiation the participant takes part in whilst at Further Education college on a Skills for Employment course:

So I done each session every day, so that helped me to learn how to sit down and focus. So then from Camden then Spring House I went to afterwards, and that helped me a lot and since Spring House and then when they moved us down here to Regents Park then that helped me a lot. So I'm concentrating more and I'm focusing more, even though sometimes I like to have a laugh and joke. But that's it, but it's helping more to deliver my, what to do anyway. It's great that I'm learning and I'm sitting down with my classmates and I'm doing what I have to do. (Ethan, interview 6)

Ethan has learnt that a barrier to his learning and subsequent entry into employment is his lack of ability to 'focus'. In this context, having a 'laugh and joke' becomes problematic, a disruption of his focus and an identity problem. For

college, his social skills, his outgoing, engaging and warm nature become elements of an identity excluding him from a mainstream 'universe of meaning'. As a result, his identity is negotiated with and contingent upon the structural location he finds himself in. For college tutors he tries to assume the identity of focussed student, attempting to abandon the Ethan who likes a 'laugh and joke' in his search for a sense of belonging and employment success. What he understands from a career in the specialised system of education is that in order to do this he must abandon the social skills developed through and which support his sense of belonging in his local community as evidenced in the previous chapter. In their well intentioned efforts to enable Ethan to disguise the identity traits identified with having learning difficulties – his inability to adhere to the 'norms of proper conduct, specific ways of expressing and handling emotions' (Therborn, 1991: 183), – teaching staff introduce contradictions into his management of self. As he comments:

I mix with everybody, I mix with people that I know, you know. I mix with everybody. I say hello, that's my thing. I'm too friendly. (Ethan, interview 6)

Through his identity negotiations with college tutors Ethan has learnt that in order to become part of the shared 'universe of meaning' he must be less friendly. Identity negotiations are undermined by the hierarchical nature of tutor-student power relationships while culturally constructed identity types associated with having learning difficulties inform both tutor and student contributions. For Ethan to question both the value of his family (discussed in Chapter 7) and here his own socialising skills he has to have become clear about and accept elements of his

identity, most essentially the idea that people with learning difficulties are dependent upon the support and advice of experts at even a personal, identity level.

When student participants were asked to imagine a job they would most like to have, a feature of the responses was that employment inferred an inclusion where participants' input was valued. Seven participants wanted to work in shops or cafes, serving customers. Five wanted to work in offices. Eight participants used status signifiers, such as for example uniforms, to imagine future, socially included employment identities:

Kieran: (Silence – laughs quietly) Since I was er, since I was younger I always wanted to be a police officer. (Laughs quietly) Yeah, (Laughs quietly), the one er, the one like in Sweeney when er (laughs quietly)...

Question: Like a detective?

K: No, the uniform yeah, uniform police.

(Kieran, interview 14)

Kieran's correction of the question, 'like a detective?' makes explicit his connection between and the importance he attaches to status and socially recognisable signifiers of social significance. However, the preference for uniform may be double edged, also potentially being a conscious retreat from the 'reflexive project of the self' (Giddens, 1991: 99), a central part of which is expressing choice over how we appear in public. With a uniformed job, this choice, and the anxiety potentially caused by expressing choice, is removed. As such a uniformed imagined identity may be a claim to status and a retreat from

independence at one and the same time. The gentle laughing throughout the excerpt is a subtle and skilful use of suggested humour, perhaps in order to address any potentially mocking doubt Kieran feels might hover about his ambition, as well as providing a comforting backdrop for this personal disclosure nurtured 'since I was younger'. The laughter is skilful management of his presentation of self. It may reflect his awareness of and address any incongruities surrounding the idea of someone with learning difficulties wanting such a responsible job. As such, it is an expression of identity type, of which the participant is aware and against which he measures his own identity and identity goals.

Seven participants chose 'celebrity' as an employment goal, with dream jobs including DJs, singers and actors:

David: Drama I think, acting. I think it could be acting or cooking.

Question: Why an actor?

D: Phew, loads a reasons. There's, you're on telly and you're famous, and you got loads of money and book things and you can impress people and do good things, life. Huh (weak laugh). Be a role model. And same thing cooking, you could be a chef, go on telly. Yeah. Earn loads of money.

(David, interview 4)

The celebrity identity articulated here is characterised by 'by product' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 287) meanings including having money, planning, being impressive, doing good, having a life and being a role model, a fascinating list subtly controlled by the self-mocking 'Huh' at its centre. Both of the above are

part of a broader imagined project of or claim on inclusion through identity change. Employment in the public gaze, either in uniform or as a celebrity, is a powerful claim to social inclusion facilitated by but stretching beyond the particular type of employment imagined. Ideal employment for those who chose status and celebrity become ways of negotiating a future where their current identities have been exchanged for socially accepted and celebrated ones. Management of self takes the form of imagining a future with a different identity entirely.

Stalled lifespan transitions, or rites of passage missing or desired, represented common sites for identity constructions.

Below, Harshall validates himself as a competent, experienced and qualified worker:

Harshal: [O]ne of the teacher find it for me and I went there to have a look and I start enjoying it. And the manager start to like me more and they want to stay more and I stayed for 9 years.

Question: What did you learn?

H: Erm, I start to chop vegetables and to do salad, and serve customers, yeah, and shopping. All kinds of stuff.

Q: Did you get any qualifications from it?

Yeah, I did. I got food and hygiene certificate and I got erm, two food and hygiene and I think there was serving customers certificate as well.

(Harshal, interview 9)

A simple and clear narrative explains the getting, doing and legacy of the post building a picture of an experienced, skilled and accredited worker. Harshal's reference to serving customers and going shopping are illustrations of his communication and independence skills, both examples also consciously address key identity issues in a claim to mainstream, 'normal' identities. He then goes on to address employment's role in completing the rite of passage of marriage:

Harshal: I want to get full time job because I'm getting older, that's why, want to get full time job. Yeah. And I got a family to take care of now.

Question: Mum and Dad?

Harshal: Yeah, Mum and Dad, and I have a wife as well. Yeah.

(Harshal, interview 9)

Harshal has undergone the marriage rite of passage. However, what Giddens calls the 'psychic reorganisation' (1991: 32-3), essential to the development of new identities, has not been accomplished. Employment is seen as the mechanism through which this broader, personal transformation can be facilitated. Employment is perceived as the means to complete a journey already psychologically begun, at social, cultural and identity levels.

In the second example a missing transition – becoming independent from the Mother – provides a meaning for employment:

[I]t's a normal life thing. Every single person, 'cause we can't be on benefits our whole lives. Somewhere along the line they're gonna stop that as well, as in, 'cause we're all human. We all need something in our lives, to feed the children or normal things, even to buy clothes. How long are you gonna ask your Mum to buy you something? (Namita, interview 22)

Employment here is seen as a route away from dependence on, in any case, insecure benefits and family support, to 'normalcy'. The normalising effect of employment is explicitly and powerfully expressed, providing access to independence from home and through earning money.

Money – payment for employment – is a complex relational and identity relevant issue discussed by participants above and elsewhere in the thesis and the literature (see for example Chapter 7 and Tilley and Graham, 2010). It assumes different meanings according to context. As Chapter 7 discusses, money is meaningful as part of a wider claim to 'confirmation of significance' (Williams in Fraser, 1968: 291). Appendix 6 shows that 23 out of 27 student participants were wholly or partially dependent on state benefits. This data was gathered as an indirect consequence of interviews so it is not possible to state what proportions of household incomes benefits made up. It can be concluded that a majority of households researched were living within limited budgets. Data here reflects national statistics concerning incomes of families of people with learning difficulties (Emerson and Hatton, 2008). However, payment for employment was more regularly expressed as meaningful to the employment of others (16 out of 27 student participants). This may simply suggest that money is perceived as less relevant to or attainable by people with learning difficulties. Alternatively,

looked at in terms of identity negotiation and management of self, it may be that the 'other' described is not another person, but another self, included in the payment for employment system.

There were a number of examples of individuals seeking to critique and challenge the identities they understood they had. For example when interviewed, Faith had a voluntary post as a Day Centre coordinator, had worked full time previously in both mainstream and sheltered employment, and was applying for paid employment. During the interview she worked hard to construct what she termed an 'ordinary' identity for herself. Below, she reflects on being re-conceptualised as a person with learning difficulties after attending an hospital appointment:

At the time I was seeing a ordinary doctor, like ordinary erm social worker, ordinary psychiatric doctor as well and then all the sudden I said to myself, that's strange, 'cause I didn't even see it happen. Then I said why am I seeing some one at Bedford House for? [Camden's Adult Learning Disability Service offices] From that day I'm still saying how did they manage to get me from there to there...What I'm saying is because, I used to go to Royal Free hospital and I was admitted to a ordinary psychiatric hospital for normal patients, then next minute I'm saying to myself why have I been transferred from the normal patients over the people with learning difficulties?

Question: So you don't know how you got referred?

F: Yeah. 'Cause they, people don't know me that well. That's what I'm trying to get across to people they don't know me and they're sort of like judgements me and they don't even know anything about my life, about

my family history about my parents history, or my schooling or my education and my background and then they come along and sort of manipulate me.

(Faith, interview 30)

In this case, an identity is not inferred but explicitly allotted by a medical institution. Faith claims ownership of an 'ordinary' and 'normal' identity through reference to others in these groups, as for instance 'normal patients'. Her claims to ordinariness are consciously strengthened by linking herself with 'ordinary' professionals – doctors, psychiatrists, social workers. By the same token she actively distances herself from identities associated with having learning difficulties, constructing an identity of a woman out of place. She locates herself as someone subject to arbitrary power, judgement and manipulation. Finally, she calls upon a life narrative as a means by which others could come to an understanding of her, through which her true identity would be revealed. Faith understands herself as a woman caught in between the world of the 'ordinary' and the 'special', a position causing frustration and anger. Faith is aware of the social identities she is being invited to adopt and works hard to construct and maintain identities that challenge them, emphasising the identity traits she shares with mainstream culture, differentiating herself from people with learning difficulties in search of a sense of belonging in society.

A more collective challenge to culturally constructed identities arose historically through the evolution of the People First movement during the mid to late 1980s. Camden People First was one of the early groups and a number of participants, including Faith above, retain their membership. Anna explained:

I help to set Camden People First in 1984 when John H took me to America to learn about self advocacy, to learn how to set a Camden People First in London...

People First is important to people because it helps them to go out and enjoy things, to go out do campaigning or to go out...and help to do fund raising money for different things, which is quite nice to do. (Anna, interview 28)

The movement has increased the range of identity choices available, enabling many individuals to explore new identity territory. Much of this territory has been created as bureaucracies of People First groups have grown and as the expertise the groups have brought together is drawn upon by other agencies. Kevin illustrates this:

My name's Kevin, managing director of Camden People First. I'm the Hate Crime Officer for the National Forum for People with Learning Disabilities. I'm one of the Mets' [London Metropolitan Police] special advisors. I'm also on the exec for the Camden Society for People with Learning Disabilities. (Kevin, interview 58)

In contrast to the escape from identities uniformed jobs and celebrity represented above, here Kevin uses his status as a person with learning difficulties as a means of managing self, of negotiating an increased value for his identities, of

celebrating his difference. Kevin is not attempting to escape from his identity but to expand its scope.

The collective activity characteristic of the early days of the movement was initially central to cementing the challenge it represented to culturally constructed identity types. For example, during the run up to the passage of the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act a number of large demonstrations in central London bought national attention to learning difficulties:

There's a picture of us outside the Houses of Parliament. We were doing a walk from somewhere in Paddington to Houses of Parliament, to get our rights. The Government didn't want us to vote for this person or getting that sorted out. We want our rights! That's why we was on a march...we want to speak for ourselves not have someone else telling us you can't do this, you can't do that. We want to do this, we want to do that – get our rights. So we want to have one bedroom flat for ourselves...this is what we was doing. (Richard, interview 33)

Simply put, rights mean one bedroom flats and thus equal independence, representing a challenge to the dependent nature of identities associated with having learning difficulties. However, following passage of the Bill, as collective action ebbed, Camden People First had been less successful at sustaining a challenge to commonly held beliefs about the nature of learning disabilities. This had led to some becoming disenchanted with the movement. The same Richard quoted above reflected on his attitudes towards the local People First:

Richard: No, er, no one asked me. No one asked me.

Question: Would you like to be involved?

R: No, er, they never asked me properly. They asked me if I'm interested, I said I'd think about it but no one came back to ask me. So I said, if no one comes back then that's it, I'm not interested.

(Richard, interview 33)

In the absence of collective, political activity the group had become internalised and weakened by a succession of financial and staffing problems:

[T]his is the second time we've lost all our workers and all the money that we fundraised for, campaigned and fundraised for, we had to use all that money up. But then there was people in People First they used all the money for stationary without telling us and they charged us extra money for stationary, pens and we didn't know nothing about because we we're officers of the management committee and I'm the treasurer and I should know. And they were getting a pay rise without telling me as the treasurer or the officers. All of them never told me and I was cross and annoyed.

(Anna, interview 28)

This disempowering decline illustrated here disables People First structures from challenging at a social level commonly held beliefs about the nature and identities of people with learning difficulties, though continued membership may support this project at an individual level. Many of those discussed here who

continue to strive for a clearer social understanding of what people with learning difficulties have to offer have remained committed People First members.

This section examined how individuals become aware of and/or seek to use identities associated with having a learning difficulty. It looked at identities that participants thought appropriate to employment and inclusion and at how individuals and groups had challenged the limitations of the identities associated with having a learning difficulty. It found a number of examples of participants seeking to use identity as a form of 'protective custody', as a means of negotiating the help they felt they required as someone with a learning difficulty. The section found examples of participants – in particular students with learning difficulties – expressing a desire to exchange the identities they felt they had for ones they imagined led to greater social status and therefore social inclusion, with participants wanting to become policemen, chefs or celebrities. Participants discussed the normalising effect of employment, through money and independence. It concluded by discussing challenges to identities associated with learning difficulties, with individuals aware that such an identity had been assigned to them and seeking ways to dispute this, and groups organising and publicly demonstrating against the limitations of such identities in order to extend the scope of what people with them were capable of.

2. Employment, inclusion and identities

Having considered how individuals seek to negotiate their identities as they prepare for and seek employment, the second section analyses how people with

learning difficulties seek to negotiate their identities in employment. It illustrates both their active management of self and some of the problems these attempts face. The section discusses how culturally constructed identity types disable attempts to actively manage how individuals present themselves whilst at work.

Below, Richard reflects on an early period of full time employment. This participant was one of the six people with learning difficulties placed in Local Authority employment during the mid 1980s (see Chapter 5) being given a job in one of Camden borough's cemeteries:

(Sighs) When you start talking to 'em, er talking to him then suddenly you, isn't, your overheard something from another person, you try to tell another person what that person saying then you are in shit. I don't know why, they've all been listening, don't want to talk to me or work with me because I might tell this person or that what that person said. So they said right, when I go in everybody quiet. Feels like I been sent to Coventry.
(Richard, interview 33)

Therborn argues that an aspect of social belonging requires having 'a certain way of interpreting or defining situations, of coping with uncertainty and of emitting signals' (1991: 183). The example above illustrates how far away from this 'universe of meaning' (ibid) Richard was during this phase of his employment career. Richard moved from a period at Camden's ATC (see Chapter 5) to mainstream employment via the agency of the newly created, voluntary sector based employment service. A previous learning and training career spent in specialised provision, the 'structural location' (Therborn, 1991: 188) of

specialised services, had not prepared him to begin to manage the 'complex of relationships' (Rose, 1999) he finds in employment. The result is the participant is ostracised by his workmates, ending any possibility of him negotiating his way towards an identity more suitable to the employment context. Here his exclusion is straightforwardly achieved through the silence of his colleagues. Richard also reflects on the employment he had when interviewed, working as an office manager for a local learning difficulties voluntary sector agency:

I'm enjoying it. Well sometimes I get in a bad mood but I don't want to go into details of it. One time, between you and me...I was gonna literally picked up a tin and fling it at K. But that's when I'm in a bad mood. That's it, the nearest thing, bang, I nearly chucked it, 'bout that much away from it. (Richard, interview 33)

The participant's suppressed anger illustrates his continued frustration and unease, the difficulties he faces interpreting and abiding by workplace cultures. Therborn argues that social belonging infers learning 'norms of proper conduct, specific ways of expressing and handling emotions' (Therborn, 1991: 183). Richard understands that throwing things when angry is not appropriate behaviour. He manages his desire to do this by internalising the reasons causing him to want to, blaming his 'bad mood'. The management of self at work includes blaming himself for employment's frustrations, blaming his own inability to cope. Identity negotiation requires an on-going reflexive critique of his identity, one consequence of which is the closing off of avenues of expression he understands as inappropriate to an employment 'universe of meaning'. Inclusion in the employment context is compromised by his interpretations of his own failings.

Instead of confronting a potential cause of his frustration – K's behaviour – Richard suppresses and internalises his awareness of what he perceives to be a weaknesses of his identity as a person with learning difficulties. The silent presence of identity types makes itself felt through the self-doubt introduced into Richard's interpretations of employment situations.

A second example is provided by Margaret who, as Chapter 5 discussed also attended the Greenwood ATC. Below the participant reflects on a job she had at a Camden-based biscuit factory:

It was quite a big factory. I never really mixed with the people there. I mostly kept myself to myself. They didn't seem very sociable. They did used to say hello and that but I used to take my sandwiches for lunch. I was mostly on my own there. (Margaret, interview 32)

Margaret's problematic negotiating of identity is rooted neither in the behaviour of 'the people' nor in the behaviour of Margaret herself who 'kept myself to myself', but in the breakdown of relationship, or, more accurately, the stalling of friendship development. Her reflection about work colleagues, who 'didn't seem very sociable' but who 'used to say hello and that', hints at the unexplored potential for employment space to support identity negotiation on the basis of the 'common condition' (Williams in Fraser, 1968 280-82) of employment. Williams argues that employment encloses people in common space and time contexts and requires them to perform similar tasks in cooperation with each other and on this basis one employment meaning is that it is a common condition for humankind, giving each individual employed a knowledge of what the other is experiencing. On this

occasion, that opportunity is lost. Margaret is not able to make friends, while her work colleagues are reticent to include an individual who, for whatever reasons, seemed reluctant to join them. The resultant exclusion from the social group is confirmed in the line 'take my sandwiches for lunch', eating alone during a key period of workplace social bonding.

This example contrasts greatly with the participant's recollections of her time at the ATC, which she remembers fondly as a period of friendship development and social bonding (see Chapter 5). Therborn argues that one element of belonging is that individuals have a 'shared identity with some people and a shared differentiation with others' (1991: 183). Margaret's identity signals the 'differentiation' setting her apart from her colleagues, importantly for both her work colleagues and herself. Management of the self in this instance means not mixing with work colleagues, a self imposed exclusion reinforced by the reticence of work colleagues actively to include her. The potential for this workplace to support belonging through including and accepting Margaret is undermined by the breakdown of the negotiation process between the participant's identity and the workplace culture, itself largely caused by Margaret's self-imposed isolation. Conscious of what she interprets as the failings of her identity type, Margaret withdraws and retains it.

As discussed in Chapter 7, Len worked in a leather factory in Camden for nearly 34 years. Here he discusses what he misses about work:

Question: Did you enjoy work?

Len: Yes I did yeah.

Q: You got on with people OK?

L: Most, most of 'em yeah.

Q: Do you miss it?

L: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: What do you miss?

L: I suppose the laugh of the people.

(Len, interview 31)

Len misses the slightly disembodied 'laugh' of the collective 'the people'. Employment takes on meaning as a result of the light-hearted moments of employment expressed in the laughter of his colleagues. Len does not link himself with specific individuals – he never mentions a particular friend for example – but with a collective expression of enjoyment, moments, at least potentially, of inclusion. Meaning is fragmented, piece-meal and contradictory and Len works hard to construct and re-construct it. Also here however is partial exclusion. Len doesn't say 'having a laugh' and one wonders whether Len joined in or just observed. There is a loneliness to the observation, an employment identity partially included in a disembodied social activity of others without being able to lay claim to being included in or by it.

Chapter 7 discussed the meanings that Anna constructed from employment time. Below, this chapter analyses how she perceives the relationships she has with her work colleagues and how she seeks to negotiate her identity to achieve social belonging.

I started for three weeks, so I think I started about November doing six weeks because they had a chat about what people thought about me, say well three weeks is no good, er we'll give her six weeks. Then after six weeks, they put me for six weeks, and then every so often 'till I made six months they test me out, and asked people how I was getting on, giving me supervision and that. (Anna, interview 28)

The collective of colleagues is at once perceived by Anna as acting as an agent of social control in the workplace – observing and reporting on Anna's behaviour in order to contribute to the decision regarding her future employment – and as an agent of social support through contributing to employment supervision. Anna understands social support and control to have become co-joined through the agency of the colleague collective, acting at the same moment as both her supporters and her assessors – in a way that Anna herself can never hope to be part of – in an endlessly complex process of included exclusion. In a second extract, Anna illustrates how the management of self links with the situated negotiation of employment identities, and how this informs belonging:

Question: Do you get asked onto advisory boards?

Anna: Yeah advisory boards well I can't really do that because I work. I'd love to do it but I can't. Like the National Forum I can't do because I'm working. I'm going to the London Forum because it's only once in a while. I mean I'd love to do some of these things but it's my job you see I got to think about. I don't take it off unless my work tells me I can take it off. Like the national Assembly MENCAP, if they let me have it off then I take it if they said no then I wouldn't. If I need the time off they'll let me have it but

I've always said to Christine [her manager] 'say no to me, Christine you say no, you don't have to say yes to me all the time. If you think I shouldn't have the time off and I've had plenty of time off you should say no'. 'No Anna I won't say', I said, 'you can if you want', 'yes Anna I know, but I won't.'

(Anna, interview 28)

Anna consciously seeks to negotiate ideas of her identity and the identity she would like to have and have others see, with the identity she perceives her employer and colleagues associate with her. The extract shows that Anna wants to have an 'ordinary worker' identity, complete with the limitations on personal time that entails. Her employer is denying her this, by refusing to restrict her time. By being, for Anna, too permissive, her employer continues to enforce a set of, in effect, excluding, 'special' identities. She does not achieve an 'ordinary worker' identity because she continues to be treated in a 'special' way by her employer and colleagues. Anna categorises herself as 'the only person with a learning disability' in work, yet describes a life as a 'normal' worker, doing a 'normal' job.

The effects of culturally constructed identity types act on both Anna, who retains at least elements of a culturally constructed identity and on her colleagues. Their 'well intentioned condescension' is apparent to her and fails to convince her that they accept her into their 'universe of meaning', denying her this 'shared identity'. The 'unintended consequences' (Giddens, 1990: 235) of the best efforts of work colleagues and manager is that her inclusion in the workplace is compromised. Situated negotiation of identity is blocked in this instance by condescension, by insisting on giving special treatment to someone who doesn't need it and makes explicit requests for it to stop.

Finally, this section discusses how culturally constructed identities persist despite long employment careers. Reg was 74 when interviewed and worked as a volunteer at a Day Centre run by the Camden Society. Previously, he had worked full time since leaving school probably at the age of 14:

Alright Len. [Says hello to someone passing]. I started with the Camden Society for a very long time. I must have been here, near, oh I gonna say, between 20 and 30 years, I must have been. A good bit. Because I started mostly in Mail Out, helping them with their jobs and sometimes I've been having big jobs in there as well. And that's the kind of the thing I been doing, helping 'em out. Very experienced, say experience. Even when I was on the railway, I had 26 years service with them too. (Reg, interview 34)

Reg presents himself as part of the furniture of the Camden Society with his shouted greeting to someone passing. He establishes his historic credentials with claims to 20 or 30 years service with them. The Mail Out service to which he refers did not in fact start until the mid 1990s so these claims are misremembered or possibly consciously exaggerated to strengthen identity claims. Fundamental to this extract is the notion that Reg is 'helping 'em out', that he is a trusted worker to whom the Society turns, making claim to the to a service provider identity. In the final sentence Reg emphasises his membership of the wider identity category 'worker' through reference to his working career, a career spanning over 50 years. These conscious efforts to construct an 'ordinary' identity are the way in which identity types associated with people with learning difficulties express themselves here. Reg's insistence on constructing them

illustrates his awareness of the learning difficulty identity he retains, the way in which he seeks to manage self through creating his own social reality in which he assumes other identities.

Giddens argues for an understanding of identities as things 'routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual' (Giddens, 1991: 52). Rapley draws out how intellectual and social 'competence' is a 'relative concept, and moreover one which is in actual social processes, actively negotiated' (Rapely, 2004: 202). A body of theory which supports the idea of individuals inhabiting numerous identities according to the requirements of the interactional contexts in which they find themselves also broadly supports this view (see for example Giddens, 1984, 1990, 1991; Callinicos, 1995, 2006; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Rapley goes further and argues that identity only exists in the contingency of discursive moments, to be understood as a personal tool for doing 'situated work in the management of self'. (Rapley, 2004: 70).

What this chapter suggests is that although Rapley's work highlights the active input of people with learning difficulties into their own identity constructions he abstracts interaction out of historical context. By situating relationships in the contingent present, his analysis is unable to explain the persistence of culturally constructed identity types and of how the social identities of people with learning difficulties have been historically maintained through the agency of the various institutions that shape the lives of people with learning difficulties. As chapters 4, 5 and 6 showed, policy, ways of delivering services and how students with learning difficulties are educated have combined over time to maintain limited identity choices. Institutional modes of behaviour that maintain learning difficulties identities are shaped by history but are passed on by individuals, albeit as a result of the unintended consequences (Giddens 1990: 235) of what might be

perceived as kind acts – enrolling someone for another year because he didn't have anything else to go to, allowing your employee with learning difficulties to have as much time off as she likes, even though she asks you not to.

Conclusion

The chapter analysed how people with learning difficulties imagine, use and construct identities they perceive to be appropriate for employment in order to explore how contexts and individuals interact to support or undermine belonging. It assesses how successful identities constructed by participants are in supporting belonging. In offering this analysis the chapter explored the active input of people with learning difficulties, as they seek to negotiate employment-centred interaction and manage their selves to cope with the complex sets of relationships of which workplaces comprise.

Therborn's argument that the 'structural location' (1991: 188) of individuals within cultures informs identity construction is supported by the data. For example, there is a difference to how Kevin and many of the student participants deal with the identities they perceive they have. Students, located in segregated education and training provision try to escape from the identities they perceive, by imagining future work roles as celebrities, police officers and other culturally included and valued roles. Kevin, with years of experience in the self-advocacy movement, actively uses his identity as a person with learning difficulties to express his social and personal worth. His location, accepted on to mainstream

committees as a representative of people with learning difficulties, supports not a change in identity but a valuing of it.

This chapter shows that identity negotiation is informed and to a large part over time disabled by the silent presence of culturally constructed identity types – labels – which act on both sides of the identity bargaining process, on non-disabled employers and on people with learning difficulties themselves. I discuss how this impacts on the idea of employment providing social inclusion and other issues in Chapter 9.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

Introduction

This research set out to assess how important employment is to the lives of people with learning difficulties, and the extent to which employment can support social inclusion. I decided upon this research focus as a result of three considerations. My own experience of working with people with learning difficulties suggested that people wanted to work but rarely found full-time employment. At the same time, by 2007 policy-makers were increasingly focusing on employment as a way to address the social marginalisation of people with learning difficulties. Finally, early conversations I held with key stakeholders, including those providing employment support services, indicated that many people believed employment to be almost an irrelevance for people with learning difficulties, attitudes that stood in tension with policy.

As a result I decided to explore the history of employment for this group, to assess whether people with learning difficulties had always been marginal to the labour market and to explore whether people with learning difficulties themselves felt employment had relevance to their lives. My choice of oral history methodologies flowed from this, with its focus on open interviewing supported by archival research. These considerations helped frame my subsequent research questions. This chapter discusses conclusions drawn from this research.

A key feature of the thesis was my application of theories and sociological approaches that have tended not to feature in learning difficulty or wider disability

studies. At the core of the thesis' exploration of agency-structure relationships has been the theory of structuration (Giddens, 1990). As shown below, this theoretical approach supported an understanding of the experiences of people with learning difficulties within a wider context of mainstream historical processes. The conceptual framework developed in the thesis, drawing on Giddens, supported an analysis concerning how contexts govern the social construction of the employment of people with learning difficulties and how individuals interact with and influence context. Structuration helped to illustrate the varied, complex and 'mutually dependent' (Giddens, 1990: 54) ways in which relationships between agency and structure govern experience. Goffman's notion of 'protective custody' (1990: 33) was also important in exploring elements of agency-structure interaction, for example in the analysis of tutors' perceived roles in FE colleges discussed in Chapter 6, or in the exploration of space and how social spaces influence what employment comes to mean discussed in Chapter 7.

Sociological analysis of contextual issues, especially time and space, revealed how people draw meaning from their experiences in specific circumstances. Being able to deconstruct experience, to isolate it in time and space, enabled an analysis of the contextualised, contingent aspects of experience and identity. The ideas of Bourdieu (1963), Thompson (1967) and Adams (2002) in particular informed this analysis.

My analysis of what employment means for people – with and without learning difficulties – was informed by the work of Raymond Williams (1968). This enabled an exploration of both the unique ways in which people with learning difficulties construct meanings from employment and the meanings they share with people without learning difficulties. In this sense, an analysis of employment meanings and their time and space contexts measured the extent to which people with learning difficulties draw from the same 'universe of meanings' (Therborn, 1991)

those without learning difficulties do. The thesis illustrates the limitations of a concept of social inclusion, to which others in disability studies have alluded (see especially Barnes and Roulstone, 2005). This thesis explores how a concept of cultural belonging, in particular as described by Therborn (1991) can broaden and deepen our understanding of how social inclusion might become meaningful to people with learning difficulties, how they might become 'included and accepted' (Buckley, 2000).

Personal reflections

This research has taken me on a personal journey on which I have discovered the views, abilities and histories of people with learning difficulties. A relentless process of self-reflection and self-evaluation has accompanied the research, requiring me to develop new ways of working and thinking, abandoning many old ways in the process. As Chapter 3 discussed, this involved moving from a previous service provider identity to one more appropriate to research, discarding what Ann Day calls the 'assumptions and presuppositions' (2008:45) of a former career. I have learnt a great deal about the capabilities of people with learning difficulties and how in the absence of reflection these can be missed. Rapley(2004) and others (see for example Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996; Antaki, Condor and Levine, 1996), argue that people with learning difficulties have a range of social and interpersonal skills that can go unacknowledged. Reflexively re-considering my own input into interviews led me to discover not only some of the interactional skills people with learning difficulties have, but also the ways my early interview behaviours were informing the reality I was recording (Atkinson and Coffey, 2002: 807). In the process of

this a danger emerged of misinterpreting or even 'shepherding' (Rapley, 2004: 89) the behaviour of those interviewed. Actively reflecting on this significantly improved the research relationships I was subsequently able to develop. This reflective method has the potential to inform the practice of those providing services for people with learning difficulties more generally, potentially supporting the development of more equitable and mutually constructed relationships with service users in the spirit of person-centred provision.

The research questions

This section addresses each of the research questions and discusses what the thesis adds to the literature. It concludes with a discussion addressing the central aim of this thesis, exploring the extent to which employment provides a vehicle for inclusion for people with learning difficulties.

How did policy inform practice?

I answered this question over two chapters by analysing employment policy for people with learning difficulties between 1944 and 2010, and developing a case study analysis of employment support provision in the London Borough of Camden. The insights generated in response to this question set a context for the analysis developed in subsequent findings chapters.

The thesis described how during the 1960s and 1970s Adult Training Centres (ATC) superseded occupation centres and employment based in long-stay institutions as the key means of delivering employment training. It illustrated how

national and local government-funded and run ATC were superseded by supported employment during the 1980s and early 1990s.

The growth of ATC illustrates changed attitudes to people with learning difficulties post World War Two. They arose out of provision included in the 1959 Mental Health Act, which in practice terms established the principle that as far as possible people with learning difficulties should be cared for and controlled within communities. The centres were a tacit acknowledgement of the potential labour value of people with learning difficulties following their contribution to industry during war-time conditions of labour shortage. ATC were an acceptance that government had a responsibility to develop the employment potential of disabled people, as reflected in the Disabled People (Employment) Act (1944). The expanding network of ATC were seen – from their beginnings in 1959 – as a community-based alternative to the relatively more expensive provision of regionally based residential homes. ATC were always considered the cheaper option.

The proposed expansion of ATC provision of the 1970s had this in mind and was part of a political and fiscal agenda to reduce the costs of National Health Service provision by running down long-stay institutional provision and replacing it with ATCs. Costs were to be shunted from the National Health Service to the newly created Social Services departments in Local Authorities, decentralising provision and service costs. The expansion collapsed as economic crisis hit Local Authority spending from the late 1970s onwards.

Out of the combination of the need and determination to reduce NHS costs and the inability of Local Authorities to take up the slack due to local government spending cuts a practice – and ideological – space developed with regard to services for people with learning difficulties, including employment support

services. This was filled over time by voluntary and private sector organisations and the ideas and provisions they developed. As chapter 5 shows, in the case study of Camden, this led to the rapid growth of the Camden Society as a replacement for Local Authority provision of employment support. The organisation's growth was facilitated by networks of personal and professional relationships between voluntary and statutory sector employees, initially within a context of supportive Local Authority funding and governance. Out of these human relationships, new structures evolved, illustrating the 'mutually dependent' nature (Giddens 1990: 54) of agency and structure. Central to these new service structures was the idea that communities should be responsible for service provision, while government at national and local level should enable voluntary and, increasingly over time, private sector service providers.

By the early 1990s in the context of employment support this led to the development of the supported employment model, based on voluntary and private sector agencies bidding for funds from government in a supported employment market. As the thesis has shown, this model has failed to increase the numbers of people in employment. This failure can be considered a failure of the market model. What my research shows is that market principles of supply and demand have failed to produce more employment for people with learning difficulties, despite the historically high levels of general employment between the late 1990s and 2008. While service delivery has been, to an extent, decentralised, at a financial and ideological level control has been centralised, drawn in from the semi-autonomy of Local Authority control as envisaged in *Better Services for People with Mental Handicap* (1971), to be controlled by central government through the prime contractor funding model of supported employment.

How are young people prepared for employment?

I answered this question by considering developments in post-16 education and employment training. Chapter 6 considered three types of post-16 education and training: an employment support agency; a specialist teaching provision and the specialised education of mainstream Further Education colleges. The Working Group on Learning Disabilities and Employment report (2006) argued that the segregated education of the special school system results in employers and people with learning difficulties being ignorant of each others' needs (2005: 63). My research explores the strengths and weaknesses of specialised teaching and training provision. It found systemic failure to develop professional knowledge regarding learning theory and people with learning difficulties and in training specialist teachers. My research showed that teachers hold a wide range of opinions regarding the learning capacities of students, often expressing very low targets for learning achievement. The research highlights poorly developed curricula, with repetition of basic skills and learning experiences. Students and teachers reflected on the lack of a sense of progression for students, at both educational and personal levels. This research captured the poorly resourced nature of provision. It found that the newly required employment-centred elements of curricula were largely 'tacked on', with college tutors expected to add supervision of work placements to their job roles with little extra help. Tutors – and other education professionals – expressed doubts about the government's motives for the employment focus of courses at a general level. In none of the education provision investigated were staff convinced that any more than a tiny handful of students could expect to find work, giving reasons ranging from the lack of learning capabilities of people with learning difficulties as a whole to

questioning whether the employment agenda was in fact about moving people from Incapacity Benefit to Job Seekers Allowance.

Chapter 6 highlighted failures in relationships with teaching staff and non-disabled student peers within colleges which undermined students' with learning difficulties inclusion in their FE colleges. It illustrated how this 'included-exclusion' resulted both from a lack of consistent leadership from college authorities, and from a conscious withdrawal from college life by learning difficulty tutors on behalf of their students. This served to maintain the 'protective custody' tutors felt it was their duty to offer. These failures resulted in a compromised inclusion in space in each of the four learning centres researched.

Chapter 6 also illustrated the concept of 'unintended consequences of actions' (Giddens, 1990: 235). In attempting to act in the best interests of students the policy and practice of teaching/training institutions regularly in effect deepens the exclusion their students' experience, disabling the extent to which identities might be challenged. To conclude, my research shows that post-16 education largely fails to address issues of social exclusion or prepare students adequately for the world of work. Important elements of educational systems – including curricula, institutional management, staffing and staff attitudes – combine to under-develop the potential students with learning difficulties possess.

What does employment mean to people with learning difficulties?

I addressed this research question by exploring how people with learning difficulties describe what employment means to them. The chapter drew on the work of Raymond Williams (1968) in particular. This enabled an analysis that considered the similarities and differences between what work means to people with learning difficulties and those without learning difficulties. In this way the

chapter developed an assessment of the extent to which people with learning difficulties shared in the 'universe of meaning' of employment. Given this, a general conclusion made was that employment time and space offers the possibility of inclusion, even social belonging, on the basis of the 'common conditions' of employment, that people in work have a broadly similar set of experiences based around giving their time in return for money wages. The chapter found that in this common process of employment lies the potential for social inclusion and belonging.

A number of temporal and spatial themes emerged during analysis, including the conflicting nature of 'protective custody'– offered by families, learning difficulty communities and other agencies and social spaces – and how the concept influences what employment comes to mean. My research found in the majority of cases protection was given without having been requested. Most often protection served to deepen social exclusion, maintaining an idea of physical safety and often serving the psychological needs of those providing the protection, at the cost of social isolation for people with learning difficulties.

Research showed payment for employment time to be a key issue. A significant number of research participants reflected on the practical advantages of being paid; the inclusion at the level of 'consumption activity' (Burchardt et al, 1999) that it inferred. Others illustrated how wages set a value on the labour time of people with learning difficulties, a measurement of their social value. Echoing a materialist analysis, Adam (1995) reflects on how capitalist relations of production commodifies labour time, turning how an individual spends their time into a thing to be bought and sold according to the value society sets it. A number of participants expressed an understanding of this, illustrating their awareness of the nature of the labour market drawn from the same 'universe of meaning' as the rest of the – non disabled – labour force. Participants articulated the idea that to

be included meant to be paid the going rate for the job, undermining notions that voluntary or work placement represents social inclusion.

Mutuality emerged as a common theme. For a number of participants employment meant the opportunity to show your value to the community, to work in partnership with it, to give your labour in order to negotiate the terms of your acceptance. Another theme – of the morality of employment – sets the tone of another side of this negotiation.

The moral value of employment, how working set the context within which an individual's moral worth might be measured, was discussed by a number of participants including some who had spent time in long-stay institutions. As the research illustrates, moral judgement has a history of being consciously used by institutional cultures as a means of social control. For example, the term 'in disgrace' was being used as late as 1987 in long-stay institutions to highlight an individual's bad behaviour as a means of controlling it. The term carried with it punitive consequences – like losing 'pleasures' or being put in 'the pads' (Celia interview 57). The first recorded use of this term, serving largely the same purpose, appears at the end of the 19th century in Mary Dendy's Sandlebridge Colony (see Jackson 2000).

An awareness of their low moral standing in society, encoded in culturally constructed identity types, was shown by student participants, who expressed one meaning of employment as being a way of becoming morally 'normal'. At an individual/psychological level an awareness of the moral shortcomings society attributes to people with learning difficulties is an indicator of the effect of 'naturalised views' and identity types on constructions of the self, of how cultural constructs inform people with learning difficulties and the constructions of their own identities. These constructs and ideas are taken into the identity negotiations

they attempt in employment and a key meaning they seek from employment is the opportunity to address what society perceives and what they have internalised as their failings. Employment becomes inclusive in so far as it is perceived to offer an opportunity to measure an individual's social value in monetary and moral terms; as a way to express mutuality and contribute to communities; and a way of organising time and experience. Employment represents an opportunity to enter into a shared 'universe of meaning', to be included through the restrictions on free time, through what Terkel describes as the 'violence – to the spirit as well as the body' (2004: xi) of the 'common conditions' of employment.

How do identities influence the nature of inclusion through employment?

I answered this question by analysing the testimony of people with learning difficulties reflecting on how they regarded themselves and their identities in relation to employment and work colleagues. Having concluded previously that employment carries with it the potential for inclusion, this research question illustrated some of the key elements mitigating against it. My research suggests culturally constructed identity types associated with people with learning difficulties, in particular the notion that they are dependent, a social burden to whom employment is largely irrelevant, often passed on through 'naturalised' ideas and professional attitudes, constrain the extent to which people with learning difficulties are able to negotiate new identities.

This research shows that culturally constructed identity types inform the behaviours of both sides of the relationship, informing how people with learning difficulties approach identity negotiation and how their work colleagues and managers do. Indeed, the research suggested a sense in which the identity types themselves offered an element of 'protective custody' for people with learning

difficulties, with examples of participants drawing on it for support. The research also evidenced the extent to which people with learning difficulties actively participate and take the initiative in seeking to develop new, socially included identities whilst employed.

Chapter 8 discussed the concept of 'well intentioned condescension' (Sabsay and Platt, 1985). This expresses how institutional modes of behaviours, and culturally constructed identity types are passed on in the mundane interaction – conversations, attitudes – of everyday interaction between people with learning difficulties and those delivering services to them (Giddens, 1990: 96). Chapter 8 reflected on how this process informs identities, and how these good intentions largely perpetuate identity types. The discussion in this chapter illustrated how dis-abling identity types may be reinforced with good intentions, even through what might appear to be kind acts, for example by enrolling a student on a course for another year because he 'didn't have anywhere else to go', or allowing your employee with learning difficulties to have as much time off as she likes, even though she asks you not to.

Is employment a vehicle for social inclusion?

The overarching research question posed at the outset of this thesis was: Is employment a vehicle for social inclusion for people with learning difficulties?

Chapters 7 and 8 in particular illustrated the potential and problems of employment supporting social inclusion. In the 'universe of meaning' (Therborn, 1991: 183) created by the conditions and relationships of employment, in the 'common condition' (Williams, 1968: 280-82) of having a job, lies the potential for the social inclusion and at a more profound level the cultural belonging of people with learning difficulties. Chapter 7 reflected on employment and how, through

people with and without learning difficulties drawing similar meanings from what employment offers, employment contexts – workplaces and the networks of relations they represent – have the potential to unite people with and without learning difficulties. As discussed above, a number of problems stand in the way. One discussed in the Working Group for People with Learning Disabilities and Employment report (2006) was the lack of understanding employers and potential employees with learning difficulties had of each other due, in the first instance, to segregated education. This was also reflected on in Chapter 6 which illustrated the low expectations of employability which frame the learning experiences of students with learning difficulties.

The Working Group report, and *Valuing Employment Now* (2009) highlight a number of practical, administrative problems – primarily how benefits systems feed into the process of finding work and how these systems interact with the low waged jobs people with learning difficulties usually access – which limit the numbers in employment and maintain low level incomes for those few in work. Grover and Piggot (2007) reflect upon the carrot and stick approach which has consistently been adopted by authorities to address this, with successive governments developing punitive measures to attempt to pressurise people into employment, rather than addressing more fundamental issues like the low level of the minimum wage or attempting to develop learning experiences which skill-up people with learning difficulties, allowing them to access better-paid jobs. This policy approach acts to reinforce the stigmatising 'naturalised views' at the core of social exclusion, working against the inclusive vision of documents such as *Valuing Employment Now*.

As Chapter 4 discussed at length, the modern day context for employment and employment support of people with learning difficulties is heavily influenced by the policies and ideologies developed through the *Valuing People* documents

from 2001 to 2009. As that section noted, though an acknowledgement of the idea that employment is important to people with learning difficulties in terms of practice, the ideologies are flawed. The central weakness argued by this thesis is that *Valuing People Now* and *Valuing Employment Now* continue – indeed strengthen – the case for employment support schemes led by market forces, provided on an individualised basis. These schemes argue against the need or relevance of universal provision funded through social welfare, despite the fact that since 1990 market-driven schemes have overseen a fall in the rate of employment for people with learning difficulties from 7 percent to 6.5 percent during a period – from 1997 to 2008 – of historically high rates of general employment. Until policy recognises that the market has not worked in providing employment for people with learning difficulties it is unlikely rates will improve.

As Chapter 8 discussed, culturally constructed identity types inform general perceptions of employability. They set the limits to which people with learning difficulties can move from social categories and identity category types which characterise them as unemployable, to being included and accepted in workplaces. These social/cultural constructs act on both sides of the process of identity negotiation. This hidden means by which people are excluded and at time exclude themselves will need to be addressed at a socio-cultural level if employment is to serve the inclusive purpose expected of it. Importantly, cultural identity constructs are supra-individual (Therborn, 1991: 182) acting on those regarded as having learning difficulties as a group. As such, the idea that services can be personalised in order to support general concepts such as citizenship and inclusion on a case by case basis are flawed. Until the label 'learning difficulties' no longer silently carries with it a set of largely negative, discriminatory and excluding assumptions, the potentially inclusive nature of the 'common condition' of employment will be compromised.

Limitations to research

This section addresses three potential limitations of my research. Firstly, it assesses whether the research might be considered subjective and how this adds to or detracts from the research findings. Secondly, it discusses the nature of the case study approach used and how this contributed to the study. Finally, it asks to what extent the voice of the employer is represented and why this might usefully be added in the future.

Methodologically, my thesis is built on analysis of historical documentation and of interview data using a qualitative, interpretive approach. The thesis' emphasis on the analysis of interview data in particular may leave the research open to criticisms on the basis of it being subjective. There are two responses to this.

Firstly, my research used a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1999). This has become the most widely used framework for collecting, collating, managing and analysing qualitative data in the social sciences (Denzin, 1997). Recent developments in grounded theory (see especially Charmaz, 2007) have sought to refine still further the data collection and analysis processes, to develop rigorous checks and balances for the researcher's assessment of data. While this does not stop analysis from retaining subjective elements, it seeks to contain analysis within rigorous analytical frameworks widely accepted as relevant and valuable by research communities. Grounded theory governs without constraining subjective analysis.

Secondly, coupled with and complementing grounded theory data collection and analysis methods my research used oral history interviewing methods. There is a

large and growing tradition within oral history of valuing the subjectivity of interview data. As Portelli argues, with a broad collection of data oral history can provide us with a 'cross-section of the subjectivity of a social group or class', telling us not just what individuals did but what they and groups 'wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, what they now think they did' (Portelli 1981: 99). This approach had particular potential in an investigation of how people – with learning difficulties and without – thought employment supported social inclusion. As this thesis discusses elsewhere, establishing a quantitative measurement of social inclusion is difficult, perhaps even irrelevant since a central element of social inclusion is to what extent do individuals actually feel included by social groups, to what extent do they perceive and experience society as inclusive. As such, a broadly subjective approach to the analysis of how people feel about and perceive their own situation becomes entirely relevant and valuable.

My research also used a case study approach. The social sciences literature includes numerous examples of the use of case study, as well as analytical support for case study methods, rational and value generally (see for example Silverman, 2000; Yin, 1984). The particular case study used here is of the London borough of Camden and analysis centres largely on events in the borough during the 1980s and early 1990s. The central reason for this place and time is that during this historical period it is generally accepted that the borough was at the forefront of developing new services for people with learning difficulties, including in the provision of new and novel employment support services. The Camden case study represents a snap-shot of what was possible during this period against which research of other service providers of that time in other geographical areas might be measured. As such this case study is a

comparative element for the development of other time and place-specific case studies.

An analysis of Camden – and the Camden Society – in the 1980s also enables analysis of the Camden Society model of employment service provision over time in changing employment support contexts. The case study approach allows us to ask how successful the Camden Society model has been in developing services for its service users in light of the supported employment model that arose nationally after the Camden Society launched its own schemes. As Chapter 5 indicates, by 2010 the Society had largely been relegated to a ‘sub-contracting’ role in a service provision context characterised by a ‘prime contracting’ national funding and service delivery model and dominated by one or two national providers. The case study approach used here enabled the development of an in depth understanding of a specific complex issue (Yin, 1984: 23) which had resonance beyond the specific site studied (Silverman, 2000) in both space and time contexts.

As one result of this research project’s scope and primary aim – to capture and analyse the perceptions and opinions of people with learning difficulties with regard to employment – the voice of employers is largely missing. This would be a valuable addition to the overall picture. The Working Group on Learning Disabilities and Employment (2006), in a small survey of employer-employee relationships, found a lack of information on and understanding of the needs of people with learning difficulties from employers. Similarly, the survey found a lack of understanding of what employers required from them on the part of people with learning difficulties. The report put this down largely to poor advice to employers from government and specialist agencies and the segregated nature of specialist schooling (Working Group on Learning Disabilities and Employment, 2005: 63-64). Employer-employee relationships are under-researched. Further

research into this broad and complex area would add to our understanding of the barriers excluding people with learning difficulties from employment.

Future research

Here I outline four possibilities for future research arising from this thesis.

Job coaches, personal budgets and employment support schemes

Researching the current practices of supported employment agencies would be valuable in determining their strengths and weaknesses with a view to improving practice through developing programmes of education and training for job coaches and the agencies employing them. One of the aims of *Valuing Employment Now* was to establish quality standards and work towards specific job coach qualifications. Developing a clearer understanding of standards currently would feed into this, and build on work already begun (see for example, Beyer, 2010). Research would establish the theory base of the profession, and begin to integrate general research into the learning potential of people with learning difficulties (see for example Dee et al 2009) into employment support practice. Allen et al (2009) note that across social care and health 'there is a huge task in enabling existing staff to make a significant journey of change' in all aspects of their work and this research would seek to support that process.

The historical education narratives of the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act

A central research theme emerging from my thesis was that special education for people with learning difficulties continues to framework how they experience the

world. The thesis began to explore the ways in which people are taught shapes their social identities and the nature of their relationship with society. A follow-up research project could explore relationships between special education as it developed historically and social inclusion. It could evaluate the nature and development of the underlying principles of special education as they evolved in the years before the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act. It could ask to what extent do these principles continue to inform education for people with learning difficulties in 2012 and how does this affect their social inclusion.

Exploring the needs of employers

Employers' needs are an important consideration in a policy agenda positing employment as the primary route to social inclusion. Assessing their knowledge and opinions regarding people with learning difficulties would inform how people needed to be prepared for employment – what kinds of personal and academic skills might be required. The literature discussing this problem is very slight and relatively superficial. The report by the Working Group on People with Learning Disabilities and Employment (2006) represents the most up to date and in depth analysis of the subject and could be developed by this research project. Drawing on my own experience, it would be necessary to collect the views and opinions of employers large and small, local and national to provide a representative spread. Employers' organisations do exist – for example the Employers Forum on Disability – which aim to support their members towards employing more people with disabilities and it would be important to work in collaboration with them. However, as their members are likely to include the more enlightened section of employers, it would also be important to find ways of working with those outside of this and other employers organisations in order to establish a full spread of knowledge and opinion.

The role of Further Education

This thesis discussed the many challenges a post-16 system of education and training for people with learning difficulties faced in improving employability. Future research could explore the roots of these more closely, looking at tutor skills, sector administration and resources, and the problems associated with building bridges from specialist services to mainstream employment. Building on the findings of my research, it would be possible to investigate and address the included-exclusion nature of FE space by developing model inclusiveness in specific colleges. Within these contexts, it may be possible to develop working partnerships and other resources between students with and without learning difficulties, as well as specialist and non-specialist staff and management.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the value to the research process of drawing on sociological conceptual frameworks. What the thesis contributed to the literature was discussed and concluded that employment's potential to support social inclusion is currently compromised by the effects of culturally constructed identity types, which continue to exclude people with learning difficulties from a shared 'universe of meaning'. Overall, the potential of employment to deliver social inclusion for people with learning difficulties looks limited without significant policy change supported by fundamental changes in employment conditions and practice.

Appendix 1

Timeline

(Key: Blue = Camden reference)

- 1888 Publication of *Weak minded children* (Shuttleworth) journal article, establishes learning disability categories and uses the term 'ineducable' for the first time
- 1913 Mental Deficiency Act
- 1938 Spens Committee Report, establishing IQs of 70 and below as ones which identify those with learning disabilities
- 1944 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act
- 1944 Education Act
- 1946 National Health Service Act, National Insurance Act
- 1946 Association of Parents of Backward Children (APBC) forerunner of MENCAP
- 1948 First and only Education Committee controlled ATC set up in Stepney, East London
- 1948 United Nations Human Rights Charter
- 1951 North West London Association of Parents of Backward Children, forerunner of the Camden Society
- 1952 First short-stay home for respite opened by APBC
- 1954 National Association of Teachers of Mentally Handicapped
- 1955 Kings Fund publishes a report on Mental Deficiency Hospitals in London
- 1955 APBC changes name to National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children (NSMHC) –
- 1956 Committee of Enquiry on the Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (Piercy Committee)
- 1956 Publication of *The social problem of mental deficiency* (Tizard and O'Connor)
- 1957 By the end of the year NSMHC has 200 local branches with 12,000 members
- 1957 Royal Commission on law relating to mental illness and mental deficiency
- 1958 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act (ii)
- 1958 Holmes Road Sheltered Workshop opens in Kentish Town
- 1959 Mental Health Act, 'mental deficient', 'idiot' and 'imbecile' dropped from official use and all replaced with 'mental handicap'
- 1961 London County Council begins its ATC development with a centre in Clapham
- 1961 Enoch Powell, 'The Father of Care in the Community', announces rundown of long-stay institutions
- 1963 *Health and Welfare: The Development of Community Care* report urging Local Authorities to develop community services
- 1963 London Government Act, establishing the modern borough system
- 1964 Borough of Camden formed from Holborn, Hampstead and St Pancras.
- 1964 *Community Services for People with Mental Handicap* (Tizard)
- 1964 Camden Society for Mentally Handicapped Children grows out of North West London Society
- 1966 Camden Society's Gateway Club opens on 2nd February. 9 members meet at St Mary the Virgin Church in Primrose Hill

- 1968 The Ely Hospital Enquiry uncovers widespread abuse at hospital near Cardiff
- 1968 Health Services and Public Health Act
- 1968 Ministry of Health publish *Model of Good Practice* for training centres for PWLD
- 1969 Publication of *Changing Patterns in Residential Services for the Mentally Retarded* (Wolfensberger and Kruger)
- 1970 Education (Handicapped Children) Act. The term 'ineducable' dropped from official use
- 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act
- 1970 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act requires Local Authorities to find and keep records of the number of disabled people in their area
- 1971 Department of Health and Social Security publish the White Paper *Better Services for the Mentally Handicapped*
- 1971 United Nations recognise the rights of 'mentally retarded persons'
- 1971 Junior Training Centres absorbed by Further Education Colleges as a result of Education Act of 1970
- 1972 Publication of *The Principle of Normalisation in Human Services*, (Wolfensberger)
- 1973 Camden's Adult Training Centre moves from Fitzroy Road, to Greenwood Place
- 1973 Camden Council publish *Do We Care Enough?* its hostel plan for PWLD
- 1974 National Development Group set up by Health Minister Barbara Castle to oversee expansion and change in control of ATCs
- 1975 The Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) and the Disability Alliance, two grass roots organisations of disabled people, publish the *Fundamental Principles of Disability*. They begin to develop the Social Model of disability
- 1975 The Pathways Scheme begins, run by the National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children to train people into work
- 1976 Education Act declares that as far as practicable all children with special educational needs should be educated in ordinary schools
- 1976 Camden Society acquires its first group home, in Gloucester Avenue, housing 6 adults
- 1976 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act
- 1976 Swiss Cottage special School opens in Camden
- 1977 First paid worker joins Camden Society
- 1977 *Adult Training Centres in England and Wales: Report of the First National Survey* published
- 1977 A report from the Kings Fund claims up to 400 residents of Harperbury Hospital could leave and live in the community. Harperbury claims only 250 are capable of supported community living. Far fewer leave in fact
- 1977 National Development Group pamphlet 5 called for ATCs to be renamed Social Education Centres
- 1978 The Warnock Report on 'special needs' education offers practical ways of incorporating all children and young people with learning difficulties into mainstream schools
- 1978 Royal Commission on Civil Liability and Compensation for Personal Injury (the Pearson Commission) improves industrial injuries benefits and extends protection to PWLD
- 1979 Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Mental Handicap Nursing and Care (the Jay Report) published

- 1980 The Kings Fund publish *An Ordinary Life: comprehensive locally based residential services for mentally handicapped people*
- 1980 The World Health Organisation publish an expanded version of the classification of impairment, disability and handicap
- 1980 GROWTH set up – a Camden Society steering group to develop an employment service
- 1981 The Department of Health and Social Security publish *Care in the Community; A consultative document on moving resources for care in England* heralding the start of the closure of long stay hospitals and the return to communities of learning-disabled people
- 1981 Education Act seeks to implement the Warnock proposals and introduces statements
- 1981 Disabled Persons Act
- 1981 The Bloomsbury Project – A community service for people with mental handicap in Camden
- 1982 *1980-1990: A Decade for Change? Towards a comprehensive service for People with Mental Handicaps in Camden* published by the Camden Society
- 1982 'Speaking for Ourselves' first conference of MENCAP London Division Participation Forum, forerunner of People First movement
- 1983 Mental Health Act
- 1983 The 1981 Education Act comes into force, calling for integration of learning disabled students in mainstream schools
- 1983 *All Wales Strategy* published by the Welsh Office
- 1984 First international self-advocacy leadership conference, hosted by People First of Washington in Tacoma, Washington, with 18 delegates from London and Essex
- 1984 People First of London and Thames formed
- 1984 The Kings Fund publish *An Ordinary Working Life*
- 1984 Camden People First meets for the first time in the autumn
- 1985 Applejacks, the Camden Society café training scheme opens
- 1985 The Independent Development Council for people with Mental Handicap publish *Living Like Other People*
- 1985 The LinC (Living in Camden) pilot scheme – to coordinate the return to community of long-stay residents of St Lawrence's – begins
- 1985 Financial expansion as the Camden Society's turnover doubles in a year
- 1986 'Images of Possibility' campaign launched
- 1986 Applejacks begins operation in October
- 1987 Work-Shop opened by the Camden Society, a general employment support agency
- 1987 17 residents of St Lawrence's moved back to Camden by LinC
- 1987 Name changes to Camden Society for People with Learning Difficulties
- 1988 Education Reform Act establishing a national curriculum with exceptions allowed for learning-disabled people
- 1988 The Griffiths Report
- 1988 Disability Work Allowance
- 1989 Camden's Mental Handicap Service Liaison Group begins to meet formally, with representatives from the Camden Society and other organisations.
- 1990 National Health Service and Community Care Act

1990	White paper Disability Working and Living Allowance
1990	National Development Team set up
1990	Association of Supported Employment Agencies set up
1991	Camden Society's Mill Lane project opens
1991	The <i>Camden Better Services Project</i> report is published, detailing the views of Society members and other learning-disabled people
1991	Disability Living Allowance and Working Allowance Act
1992	At the end of the United Nations' 'Decade of Disabled Persons' December 3 is made 'International Day of Disabled Persons.
1992	Further and Higher Education Act reorganises funding for the institutions away from Local Authorities and creates the Further Education Funding Council. Act includes a 'strong statement' to provide for students with 'learning difficulties and disabilities'
1993	April 1 Social Education and Training Centre, Greenwood Place, transferred from council control to full control by the Camden Society
1993	Camden Society's Mail Out project begins
1993	KTs, a sheltered workplace run by the Council, transferred to the Camden Society. Renamed, Flapjacks
1993	Demonstrations to Parliament (March) and another to Trafalgar Square (July) calling for rights for learning-disabled people. Another demonstration in May stages a sit-down in central London, stopping traffic
1993	The Labour MP Roger Berry moves a Private Members Bill in Parliament, the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill. The Bill is 'talked out' by Michael Stern, Nicholas Scott and Olga Maitland, all Conservative MPs
1993	Disability Grants Act
1994	The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education supports human rights for PWLD
1994	St Lawrence's Hospital closes
1995	Incapacity Benefit replaces Invalidity Benefit
1995	Disability Discrimination Act
1996	Publication of the Tomlinson Report: <i>Inclusive learning; the report of the learning difficulties and/or disabilities committee of the Further Education Funding Council</i>
1997	Tomlinson Enquiry publishes <i>Inclusive Learning</i>
1998	New Deal for Disabled People
1999	Disability Rights Commission Act
2000	Carers and Disabled Children Act
2001	Learning and Skills Council – a non-governmental funding body, created by the Learning and Skills Act
2001	Access to Employment agencies replace Work-Shop in Camden and Greenwich
2001	Harperbury hospital closes as a residential facility
2001	Eve Rank-Petruzzietto is the first learning-disabled person to be appointed to the Disability Rights Commission
2001	Care Homes Act

2001	<i>Valuing People</i> , the Government's plan for learning-disabled people is published
2002	Department of Works and Pensions publish a Green Paper, <i>Pathways to Work</i>
2004	Society publishes <i>Get the Job Done</i> , a guide for employers on working with learning-disabled people, and 'Talking Inequalities', a job sharing model
2005	Disability Discrimination Act (Amended)
2005	<i>Through Inclusion to Excellence</i> published by the Learning Skills Council, 'a review of the LSC's planning and funding of provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across the post-16 learning and skills sector'
2006	The Society is providing services in 9 London boroughs and wins the status of 'Preferred Provider' for Southwark
2006	Disability Equality Duty comes into force, instructing all public employers to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people
2006	Welfare Reform Bill
2006	<i>Youth Matters; Next Steps</i> a report outlining provision for young people with 'complex needs'
2006	<i>Improving Work Opportunities for People with Learning Disability</i> report, written by a working party drawn from learning disability organisations, is submitted to the Learning Disability Task Force in the Department of Works and Pensions, and quietly buried.
2007	Camden Society moves head office from 245 Royal College Street to 60 Holmes Road with the help of £1 million of part grant, part loan from the Government's Future Funders scheme
2007	<i>Progression Through Partnership, A joint strategy between the DfES, DH and DWP on the role of Further Education and Training in supporting people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve fulfilling lives</i> published
2007	Welfare Reform Act
2009	Learning Skills Council closed down and its responsibilities transferred to Local Authorities after having amassed £2.7bn worth of debt through 'catastrophic mismanagement'.
2009	<i>Valuing People Now, a new three year strategy for people with learning difficulties</i>
2009	Publication of <i>Valuing Employment Now: Real Jobs for people with learning disabilities</i>

I need your stories

Would you like to tell me your stories about getting work?



My name is Lee Humber. I am a student doing some research into having a job.

I am looking for anyone who wants to be interviewed by me. I would like to interview both women and men.

I need to talk to you for an hour and ask you questions about whether you have been able to find work during your life. Has it been easy or hard to get work?

I have worked with the Camden Society for a long time now and Denise and the other people who work there know me. They will tell you about me if you want.

If you want to talk to me about what it means to be interviewed, or what research is you can. Tell Denise and I'll come and talk to you.

If you want to be involved print your name at the bottom of this letter and give it to your teacher. Then I will contact you so that we can meet and talk about how we get started.

----- ***For you*** -----

I would like to be interviewed

My name is...



Getting a job – my stories about finding work

Consent form

This is to make sure you are happy to give consent for your interviews to be used in research about finding work. Tick the boxes if you are happy to give consent.

1) I am happy for my interview to be written up and used in research []

2) I would like my real name to be used Yes [] No []

3) I understand that I can change my mind at any time []

4) If you want to talk to someone else about it you can talk to Joanna Bornat who is a professor at the Open University. Ask me for her contact details.

If I change my mind my interviews, my name and all contact details will be thrown away. I can change my mind at any time until July 2009.

Your Name: _____ Signature: _____

Your address:

Your telephone number:

Researcher: Lee Humber

Signature:

Appendix 4:

Ethnic and employment background, students with learning difficulties

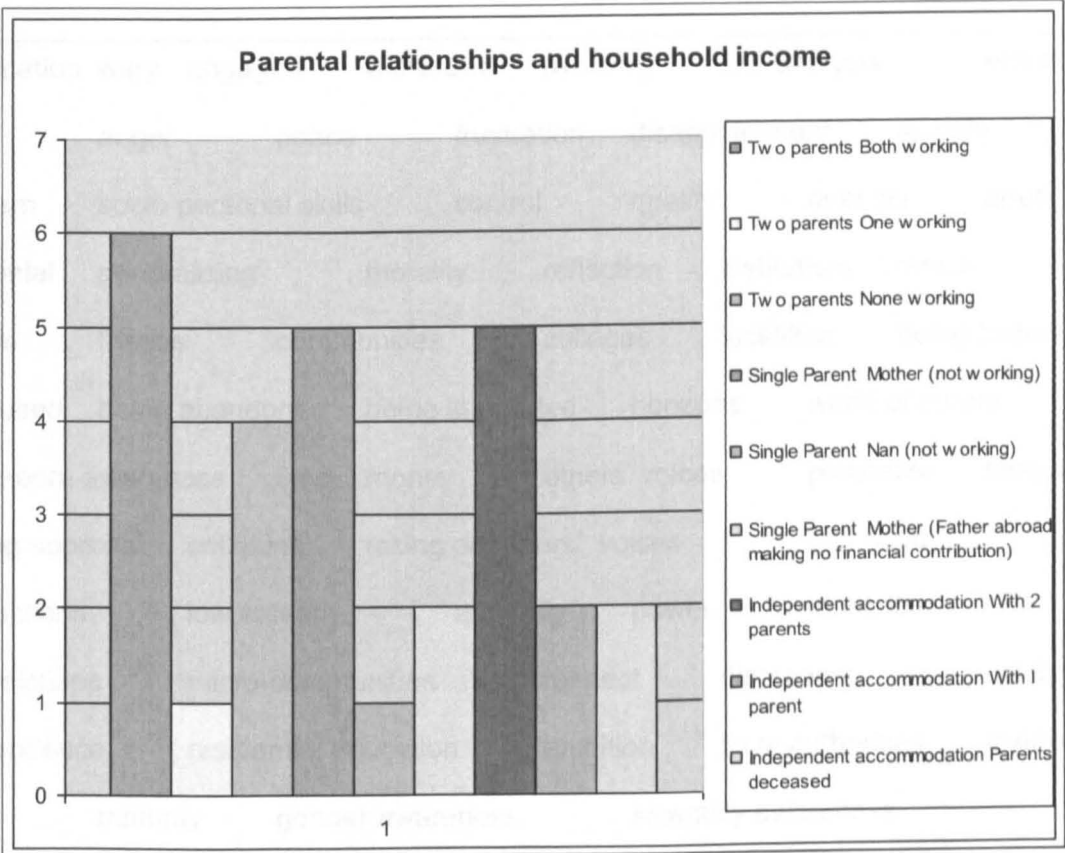
Key: Pd = Paid
Vol = Voluntary
Ft = full time
Pt = part time

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnic b/ground	Prolonged Work Time (pd/vol)	Want Work	Stated reasons for column F
Stuart	26	M	Black Caribbean	VolC	Y(ft)	Looking for freindship at work
Ethan	27	M	Irish	VolP	Y(pt)	To placate Mum
David	29	M	UK	VolP	Y	To earn money
Susan	19	F	UK	N	N	Too young to go to work yet
Harshal	32	M	Iraqi	PdP	Y(ft)	To earn money to support family
Cath	37	F	UK	PdP(ft)	Y(ft)	Opinion not given
Jamal	26	M	Black African	VolP	Y(ft)	Opinion not given
James	27	M	UK	PdC	Y(pt)	A full time job would risk benefit loss and not fit in with current lifestyle
Megan	27	F	Black Caribbean	N	Y(pt)	FT work would be too tiring
Paul	34	M	Irish	PdP	Y(ft)	Opinion not given
Adam	22	M	Chinese	VolC	Y(ft)	To earn money
Ben	23	M	Black Caribbean	VolC	Don't know	NA
Davita	22	F	Asian	VolC	Y(ft)	To earn money to support family
Haresh	21	M	Asian	N	Y(ft)	To avoid the boredom at home
Jane	21	F	Chinese	Family shop	N	Because work would be boring
Kieran	22	M	Irish	VolP	Y(pt)	Part time work fits in with current lifestyle
Lewis	29	M	Latin American	N	Y	To earn money
Larry	19	M	UK	VolC	Y(ft)	To 'Get me out' of the parental home
Mike	20	M	UK	VolC	Y(ft)	The ideal job would be driving, something of an obsession
Nalina	24	F	Afghani	N	Y(ft)	To find freindship
Nigel	23	M	UK	N	Y(ft)	Opinion not given
Narita	25	F	Asian	N	Y(ft)	To achieve a 'normal life'
Salvador	19	M	Latin American	N	Y(pt)	Getting to a full time job would cause transport concerns
Shirley	25	F	Greek Cypriot	N	Y(ft) 'when older'	NA

Appendix 5: Employment histories of Day Centre members

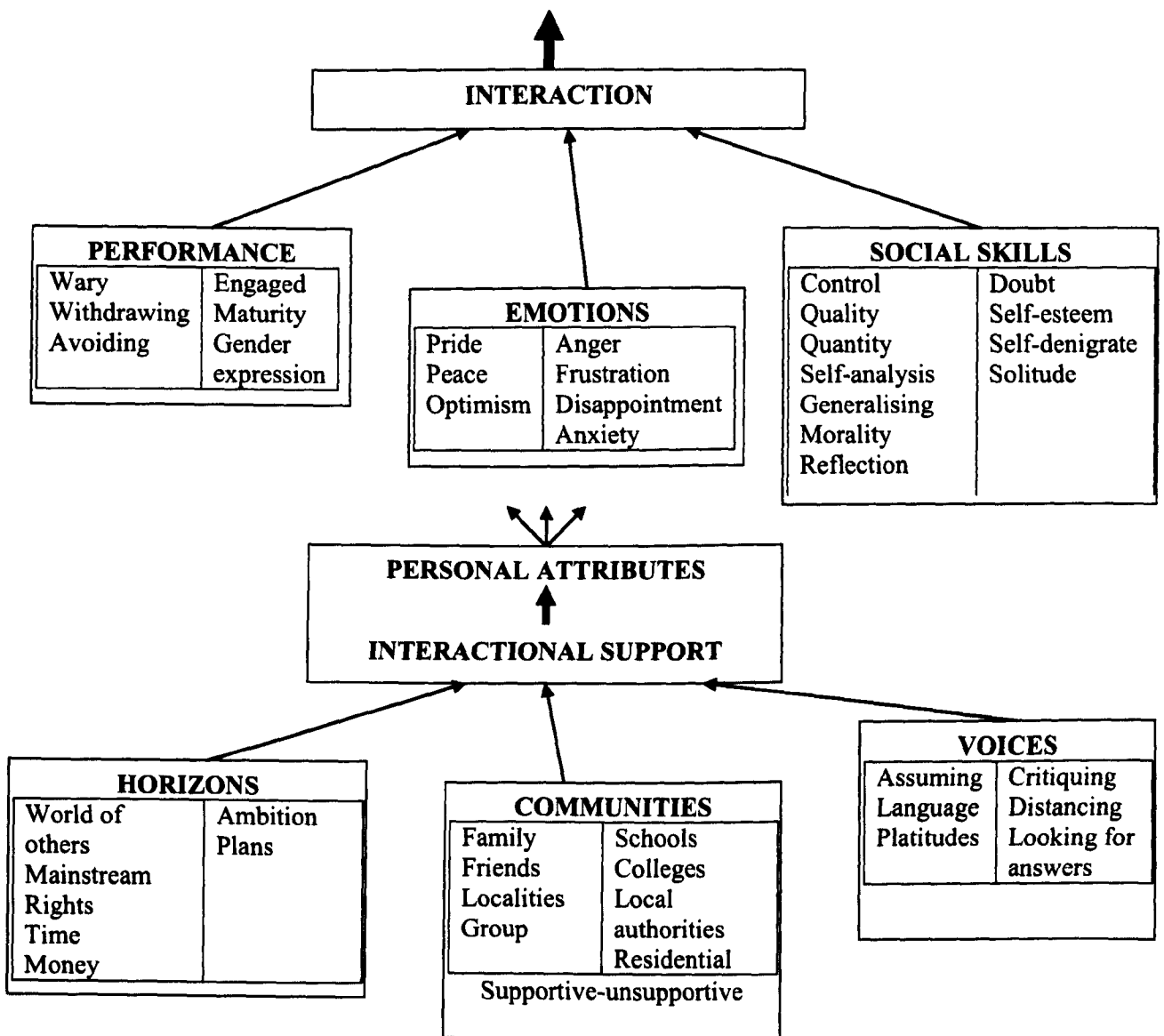
Name	First job	Employment pattern	Name	First job	Employment pattern
Anna	early 1980s	Currently sheltered local authority employment (FT) numerous short term posts previously	Richard	Mid 1980s	Numerous short term posts, currently employed (FT) in voluntary sector
Amy	Mid 1980s	Currently sheltered local authority employment (FT) numerous short term posts previously	Reg	Early 1950s	Continuous full time employment in Camden from leaving school to retirement
Faith	Mid 1980s	Short term posts previously, currently voluntary work	Seth	Mid 1980s	Numerous short term, one or two days a week jobs
Len	1960s	One job - in Camden - from leaving school to retirement	Maud	Early 1960s	Job from leaving school then long-stay institution, cleaning. Unemployed since leaving long-stay in the late 1980s
Margaret	Late 1970s	Numerous short term posts, currently unemployed	Celia	None	Long-stay institution from 5 until 35, cleaning. Unemployed since leaving long-stay in the late 1980s

Appendix 6: Parental household incomes



Appendix 7: Situational Map (messy version)

presentation	wary	engaged	withdrawn	avoiding	self-analysis	emotions	
pride	anger	peace	frustration	disappointment	anxiety		
optimism	socio-personal skills		control	quality	quantity	doubt	
self-denial	generalising		morality	reflection	institutions	family	
schools	friends	communities		colleges	localities	being bullied	
being used	being abandoned		being supported		horizons	world of others	
mainstream	awareness	time	money	others' voices		platitudes	language
seeking approval	critiquing		taking on others' voices			self-doubt	
introductions	low esteem		authority	power	identities		
contradictions	micro-communities			respect	disrespect		celebrity
independence	residential education			ambition	local authorities		instability
rights	maturity	gender awareness		sexuality awareness			



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